



The Position of the Celebrant at the
Holy Communion,

AS RULED BY THE PURCHAS JUDGMENT;

CONSIDERED IN

A LETTER

TO THE

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,

BY

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A LETTER, &c.

MY DEAR LORD BISHOP,

There have been, as I need not remind you, two judgments of the highest Court of Appeal, bearing more or less directly on the position of the celebrant at the Holy Communion. And the present Lord Chancellor, who himself had to deliver one of these judgments, as presiding member of the Court, is reported in the *Times* to have said of them, in the House of Lords, and, I believe, in your Lordship's hearing, on the 4th of June last, as follows :

“ Everyone knows how extremely difficult it is for any person—for any layman, perhaps for any lawyer—to be satisfied that these two decisions are reconcilable with each other. (Cheers.) Moreover, in one of those cases no defence was made, and only one side was heard. These decisions cannot, I think, be regarded as final.”

These are the words of one whom, quite irrespective of his high official position, men of all classes and opinions unite in regarding as a pre-eminent authority on all questions of law. It is hardly, therefore, to be wondered at that decisions, spoken of so disparagingly by such a person, should have failed to command the general adherence and submission of the clergy. In one, however, of the two

judgments referred to, viz., that in the Purchas case, which is evidently the one intended by the Chancellor to be the special mark for his animadversion, there were very peculiar grounds for distrust and dissatisfaction. If, indeed, universal opinion is to be relied on, this decision was meant to have a certain theological, as well as ritual, significance, which would not only give it the effect of ostracising a very considerable number of the most loyal, orthodox and moderate, not to say learned and laborious, of the existing body of the clergy, but would also make it practically condemn and stultify the very revisers of the Prayer Book themselves, of whose minds and words it claims to be only the faithful expositor and interpreter.

It has been more than once my privilege to converse with your Lordship on this subject, and I now avail myself of your kind permission to address to you this letter upon it.

In dealing with this question, I propose, first, to direct my attention to its purely legal aspect, if, as an unprofessional person, I may venture to do so; and then to say a few words on some of its other, and perhaps more important, aspects and bearings.

Now, I believe I shall be right in assuming, at the outset, that, when the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer are brought within the sphere

of legal inquiry, they are to be regarded as so many portions of a penal statute, i.e., of the Act of Uniformity, and are therefore to be interpreted, like all other penal statutes, in their strictest literal and grammatical construction ; so that, in fact, no one can properly be condemned and punished on the strength of any mere inference from such Rubrics, unless that inference flows from them as a matter of absolute and inevitable necessity.

Now the Purchas Judgment, so far as it refers to the position of the celebrant, purports to be founded, substantially and primarily, upon the Rubric before the Prayer of Consecration, which is as follows :

“ When the Priest, standing before the Table, hath so ordered the Bread and Wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the people, and take the Cup into his hands, he shall say the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth.”

The interpretation given in the Purchas case to this Rubric is, that the particular clause, “ standing before the Table,” is not to be applied to the priest while he is saying the prayer, but only while he is “ ordering ” the elements, previous to saying the prayer. It is intended, the judgment says, “ to set him *free for the moment* from the *general* direction ” (contained in the fourth Rubric at the beginning of the Communion Service), “ to stand at the North-side ” (*North-side* being *assumed* by the Court to

mean North-end), "for the *special* purpose of ordering the elements." And then (it proceeds to argue) he is to go back to his supposed normal position at the North-end for the purpose of saying the prayer.

But, even admitting, for the sake of argument, that the North-side means the North-end—a point to which I shall have to return hereafter—I do not believe that it can be maintained for one moment, with a fair regard to common sense, grammar, logic and history, that this clause, "standing before the Table," is properly applicable to the ordering of the elements alone, and not to the Prayer of Consecration also.

And, in the first place, to approach the question from the standpoint of mere common sense, I contend that the interpretation here given to these words, if we look to the words, and to them alone, is by no means a natural and obvious interpretation of them, but rather the reverse. I do not, of course, deny that this construction has the support, such as it is, of a very large amount of common usage, both contemporaneous with the period of the revision (1662), and since that time up to our own day. And I can quite understand how easily such common usage may have predisposed people to take it for granted, without query or suspicion, that this is the right and proper construction of them. But

I think I shall be able to demonstrate, from some very remarkable and striking facts, that, when these words are regarded apart from the light of usage, and in their own independent and intrinsic import, they are at least not apt to suggest naturally and spontaneously the view taken of them by the Judicial Committee in the *Purchas* case, but the opposite view.

1. And the first fact that I shall produce, in support of my contention, is one that is undoubtedly of a very common-place character, and therefore, perhaps, so far, the better suited to my purpose. It took place in a parish that is not far from my own and is well known to your Lordship. The incumbent (since deceased), who was greatly beloved both by his parishioners and by everyone who knew him, was accustomed to say the Consecration Prayer in front of the Holy Table; and he was on a certain occasion asked by his two churchwardens, after the delivery of the *Purchas* Judgment, why he did so, in apparent opposition to the ruling of the highest Court of Appeal. I ought perhaps to mention that these two churchwardens were both of them men of even exceptional shrewdness and practical sense, and were in fact typical men of the East Anglian middle class. My friend simply placed before them the Rubric in question, which they had never before read, and their answer was, at once, that he was clearly right, and that they

could see no other way in which he could properly fulfil the requirements of the law.

2. I will now refer to a very different case. On a certain occasion, more than twenty years ago, when it was my privilege to be the guest of the saintly author of the *Christian Year* at Hursley Vicarage, I was conversing with him on the subject of this Rubric, and I ventured to express an opinion that it was purposely left ambiguous by Bishop Cosin (who was the undoubted framer of it) in order to admit both his own practice—that of consecrating at the front of the Altar—and also the practice of those who prefer to use the North-end for that purpose. Mr. Keble's answer (which was given with more warmth and a nearer approach to impatience than I can ever remember him on any other occasion to have manifested) was, "Ambiguous! I cannot see the slightest ambiguity about it. 'Standing before the Table' surely means standing before the Table, and can mean nothing else."

3. And now I am coming to another and a different case, that of a very distinguished clergyman and leader of opinion in the opposite school of Theology, long gone to his rest—I mean the pious and revered Simeon. I was told, in the year 1852, by the late Bishop Blomfield, and by the Rev. Thomas Fuller, then incumbent of St. Peter's, Eaton Square,

that it was the practice of Mr. Simeon, during his life, and that it was also, at the time just referred to (1852), the practice of another eminent clergyman of the same school, who is still living, but whose name I withhold at his express request, to consecrate in front of the Altar. Now no one will for a moment suppose that, in using this position, either of these excellent men attached to it any doctrinal significance. But we must, of course, regard their doing so as nothing more or less than the spontaneous and even perhaps unconscious testimony of simple, honest and straightforward minds to the natural and obvious meaning of this Rubric.¹

4. But we come now to a legal authority—one of great eminence—the late Baron Alderson, who, after having achieved, as a young man, a distinction at Cambridge (both as a mathematician and a scholar), which is, I believe, quite unparalleled in the annals of that University, became, in due course, one of the ablest and most clear-sighted, as well as most upright, of the many illustrious Judges that have adorned the Judicial Bench in this country. That learned person was accustomed to say of the Rubric in question, some twenty or thirty years ago, that it evidently contemplated the Priest as “standing before the Table” at the commencement of the Prayer of Consecration, and that it as clearly left him in that position to the

¹ See Second Postscript, p. 151.

end of the prayer, and even to the end of the service, except so far as he might find it needful to remove from it, just for the purpose of administering to the communicants, and for such other exceptional purposes.

These facts and opinions—and for my present purpose opinions are facts—tend most forcibly, I think, to show that the construction put upon this Rubric in the *Purchas Judgment* is not the natural and obvious interpretation of it.

5. But I have now to appeal to a further fact of very peculiar weight and importance, viz., to that other decision of the same Court (in the case of *Martin v. Mackonochie*) to which the Lord Chancellor referred in his speech in the House of Lords, as not being reconcilable with the ruling of the *Purchas Judgment*. I am going, in fact, to appeal from that Court to itself.

Now, in the *Mackonochie* case, it was necessary for the Court to determine whether the celebrant was justified, by the directions of the Prayer Book, in kneeling at certain places in the course of the Prayer of Consecration. And, in order to determine this point, they had to refer to this very Rubric which is now under our consideration. And they deduced from that Rubric that it was not lawful for him to kneel or genuflect, or yet

even to stoop or bend his body, during any part of that prayer. And why? Because, as they said, the clause, "standing before the Table," at the beginning of the Rubric, must be construed as applicable to the prayer, and to the whole prayer, down to the very end of it, as well as to the ordering of the elements previously.

But, in order to understand the true force of this decision, in its bearing on our present point, it should be observed that the clause here referred to involves two things; viz., 1st, the posture, and, 2ndly, the position of the celebrant, at the time in question. And it is quite clear that these two things are absolutely and indissolubly bound together in the clause, as it stands. Surely, then, as Lord Cairns' remarks in the House of Lords seem to imply, if the clause is, in the Mackonochie case, to rule the posture of the celebrant during the Prayer of Consecration, it ought manifestly to have been construed, in the Purchas case, as ruling his position during that time. For, if the words "before the Table"—whatever those words mean, and the Court seemed to have no doubt that they mean in front of it—do not apply to the prayer, then clearly the whole clause, of which these words form a part, cannot be said to apply to the prayer; and if the whole clause is not applicable to the prayer, then, of course, it cannot be maintained that the other part of it, viz. the word "standing," is applicable to the prayer. And so the whole

structure of the argument on which the Mackonochie decision rests must fall to the ground. This is manifestly the line of thought that was in Lord Cairns' mind, when he made the remarks just referred to. And so utterly repugnant to common sense—not to speak of logic or grammar—is any other view of the matter than this, that one cannot be surprised at the approving cheers with which those remarks were heard and greeted in the House of Lords.

So much, then, for what I may call the appeal to common sense, as to the ruling of the Purchas Judgment on the question before us. I will now go on to consider it in the severer light of grammar and logic. And I am bound to say that it seems to me as little capable of being sustained in this point of view, as in the other.

For, let us proceed to analyse the Rubric in dispute, with a view to the grammatical examination of it.

We have, then, to deal with, in this Rubric, 1st, a subject (or agent), i. e., "the Priest;" 2ndly, a qualifying clause, "standing before the Table;" and 3rdly, two actions, viz., those of ordering the elements and saying the Consecration Prayer. And the question is whether, grammatically, the qualifying clause is to be construed as belonging to the subject (or agent) absolutely, and so, as

applying to him during both of the two actions ; or whether it is to be regarded as only embracing within its scope one of the two actions, and not the other.

Now, in order to arrive at the proper solution of this problem, we must obviously look at the order in which the words of the Rubric are placed. For here alone we can expect to find the true key to their construction. And it will be observed that, as the words are actually placed, the qualifying clause stands in such immediate juxtaposition and close relation to the subject, that it must be considered as not only belonging to it, but as even forming an integral part of it; insomuch that the two may be read and written together, as constituting one whole, in some such way as this:—"The-Priest-standing-before-the-Table."

If, then, we adopt this mode of reading the words, and introduce them, in this form, into their proper place in the Rubric, we have at once a solution of our problem.

"When the-Priest-standing-before-the-Table hath so ordered the Bread and Wine, &c. . . . he shall say the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth."

I ask, then, who is here represented by the pronoun "he"? And the answer is plain; "The-Priest-standing-before-the-Table." And so it is made quite clear that "the-Priest-standing-&c.," is to say the prayer; or, in other words, that

the prayer is to be said, as well as the elements are to be ordered, by “the Priest *standing before* the Table.”

That this is the right solution of the problem will, I think, be seen even yet more plainly, if we try the experiment of introducing into the Rubric a new qualifying clause, in the place of the existing one. Suppose, then, that, instead of reading, “When the Priest, standing before the Table, hath so ordered, &c.,” we were to read thus,—“When the Priest, fully vested, hath so ordered the Bread and Wine, &c. . . . he shall say the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth.” Would any sane person ever suppose for a moment that a Rubric so framed could possibly mean him to unrobe before saying the Prayer?

But I shall, perhaps, be told that there is a difference between the subject-matter of my hypothetical clause and that of the actual one, and that this difference vitiates my illustration. I do not think, however, that this can fairly be urged against it. For, it should be remembered, we are not concerned here with the subject-matter of the Rubric (which will be amply discussed hereafter), but only with its grammatical construction. And this is a point which is quite independent of the subject-matter.

I admit, however, of course, that, if the actual words of the Rubric had been differently placed, even supposing them to be still the same words;

if, e. g., instead of being placed as they now are, they had stood thus,—“When the Priest hath, standing before the Table, so ordered the Bread and Wine, &c.,” there would then have been very good reason for maintaining that the scope of the qualifying clause was to be limited to the one action of ordering the elements, and that it failed to reach that of saying the prayer. But, as the words actually stand in the Prayer Book, I do not see how it is possible to construe them, grammatically, in any other sense, than as requiring both actions to be performed by “the Priest standing before the Table.”

But I will now leave the question of grammatical construction, and pass on to the wider domain of logic and fact.

And, suppose we assume, for the sake of argument, that the words “standing before the Table” do not grammatically apply to the Prayer of Consecration, but only govern the posture and position of the celebrant while ordering the elements; it is manifest that, in this case, we must look elsewhere for guidance as to his posture and position while saying the prayer.

I say posture, as well as position, because both must clearly go together. They are, in fact, either both provided for in this Rubric, or they are both left unprovided for. And if, as the Purchas Judg-

ment assumes, they are not provided for here, we must plainly look for them in some other quarter.

Where, then, are we to look for guidance on these two points? Are we to look to that part of the Communion Service which immediately precedes the ordering of the elements? This would certainly appear, at first sight, to be the natural and obvious course. Let us, then, proceed to observe what the immediately preceding portion of the service is, and what are the posture and position of the Priest at that time.

Now, the portion of the service which comes immediately before the ordering of the elements is the prayer commencing, "We do not presume to come to this Thy Table, &c." And, if we are to look here for guidance as to the posture and position of the celebrant, while saying the Prayer of Consecration, we must, of course, come to the conclusion that the posture is to be that of kneeling, and the position is to be "at the LORD'S Table," whatever that may mean; these being the posture and position ordered for the prayer, "We do not presume, &c." But does this really help us? For, even if the expression, "at the LORD'S Table," were definite and clear enough for our guidance as to position, are we to accept the posture of kneeling as the right posture for consecration? For we must plainly either accept the guidance of this Rubric as to both posture and position, or we must reject it as to both. The two must go together. Can we

then believe that it is intended for the celebrant to kneel while consecrating?

There can be no doubt that this view has been maintained very strenuously by some well-known commentators on the Prayer Book, including Dr. Nichols, whose authority is appealed to with great deference in the *Purchas Judgment*. Moreover, I have myself known very excellent clergymen, in my own time, whose ritual proclivities were the very reverse of being Puritanical, to use the posture of kneeling for consecration.

But there is one argument to be brought against this view, which is, I think, quite sufficient of itself to dispose of it. And it is this, that, in the Prayer Book of 1604, which was the one in use before the revision of 1662, the posture ordered for consecration was that of standing; the Rubric before the Prayer of Consecration, in that book, being simply this,—“Then the Priest, standing up, shall say as followeth.” But, can we believe that the revisers of 1662, being such men as we know them to have been, were at all likely to change the posture of standing, in this place, to that of kneeling? Or, even supposing that they did really wish to do so, would they ever have thought of accomplishing the change by means of such an ungainly and unintelligible expedient as that new Rubric which they placed, instead of the one just quoted, before the Prayer of Consecration? I cannot imagine any simple-minded person reading this new Rubric for

the first time, and reading it in the light of the old one, to entertain for a moment the idea that such a change could ever have been in their minds. The whole theory, indeed, on which the supposed change is based, is but too evidently a mere after-thought of a later period, suggested for the purpose of evading the plain force of that clause in the Rubric about "the Priest standing before the Table," and its too obvious application (as ruled in the Mackonochie case) to the mode of saying the Prayer of Consecration.

But the Judicial Committee in the Purchas case were clearly alive to the untenableness of this theory. And, therefore, instead of referring us to the prayer immediately before the Prayer of Consecration, for guidance, as to the posture and position of the Priest while consecrating, they send us right back to the very beginning of the Communion Service, viz. to that fourth introductory Rubric which speaks of "the Priest standing at the North-side of the Table." And, assuredly, one does not see how they could well direct us anywhere else, after having felt it their duty to reject the more ready-at-hand, as well as more natural, guidance of the Consecration Rubric itself. At all events, to these words they very unhesitatingly refer us, as ruling both the posture and position of the Priest throughout the whole of the service, *except* either when a deviation is expressly enjoined, or else when it is rendered absolutely necessary by the

nature of the thing to be done; in either of which cases he would be considered as “set free”—to use their own expression—from the general direction to stand at the North-side (or North-end, as they understand it), just to the extent so indicated or required.

But, even if we allow, for the moment, that the North-side means the North-end,—which I do, only for the sake of argument, leaving the point for future discussion,—I think there are certain other considerations which militate most seriously against this theory of theirs, and I will mention one which appears to me to be quite unanswerable. It is, that we have no such exceptional directions given, with regard to the posture and position of the Priest, either while he is “humbly presenting and placing the alms upon the Holy Table,” or yet, again, while he is placing the Bread and Wine upon the Table, immediately afterwards.

For, let us see how the absence of such exceptional directions in these two places bears upon their theory. It must follow, of course, from this absence, according to their view, that both of these two acts—“presenting the alms” and “placing the Bread and Wine upon the Table”—ought to be done by the Priest standing at the North-end; *unless* there be anything, in the nature of the acts themselves, to make it necessary that they should be done somewhere else. But how does the case stand in this respect? Is there anything, in either

of these two acts, to prevent their being done at the North-end?

And, first, is there anything of the kind, in the act of presenting the alms? For my own part, I can conceive of nothing,—nothing, at least, which would not apply with quite equal force, if not greater, against consecrating the elements at the North-end; no reason, indeed, except such as is founded, in both cases alike, upon a class of considerations which the Judicial Committee in the Purchas case not only ignored, but purposely disregarded and set aside.

But the second of these two points—that of placing the Bread and Wine upon the Table—is a much more serious matter, in respect of its bearing upon their view. For, if we examine their view in relation to this point, I think we shall see that they have involved themselves in the clearest possible self-contradiction.

For, observe, in the first place, that, according to their theory, the Bread and Wine ought to be placed on the Holy Table by the Priest standing at the North-end of it, *unless* there be either an express direction or a clear necessity to the contrary. But we have seen already that there is no direction to the contrary, and I think it will appear equally obvious that there is nothing in the nature of the act itself, which, according to their view, at least, should make it necessary for the Priest to do it anywhere else than at the North-end. Nay, more,

I would venture to say that, according to their view, there is the very best possible reason why he ought to place them at the North-end. For, assuming, in conformity with the ruling of the Court, that the elements are afterwards to be consecrated in that position, it must surely appear much more reasonable that the Priest should place them there at first, so as to be ready for consecration at the proper time, than that he should place them somewhere else at first, and thus involve himself in the necessity of an unseemly and inconvenient change of position afterwards, in order that he may remove them to the right place for consecration. If, then, we accept this *dictum* of the Court, as to the continuous obligation of the North-end position throughout the service, in its entire spirit, and in all its legitimate consequences, I do not see how we can evade the conclusion, that it is the clear duty of the Priest to place the elements, in the first instance, at the North-end of the Table, and nowhere else.

Now, I will not dwell here upon the notorious fact that this supposed duty of the Priest, like that other supposed duty (just before considered) of presenting the alms at the North-end, is universally ignored by the clergy in their practice, and that no conceivable Court of Appeal would ever think of enforcing it upon him. But I will proceed to consider how this supposed duty tallies with another supposed duty, arising out of the Court's

interpretation of the Rubric before the Prayer of Consecration, containing the clause about "the Priest standing before the Table."

Now the Judicial Committee say that that clause is intended merely to set the Priest free, for the moment, from the general obligation to stand at the North-end, for the special purpose of ordering the elements, previous to Consecration. But, let me ask, what amount of ordering would be required to render it necessary for him to come round from the North-end to the front of the Table? Not, surely, the mere uncovering of the elements or of the vessels, preparatory to Consecration; or any other like description of ordering. For everything of that kind could be done by him far more conveniently, while standing at the North-end, supposing the elements to be at the North-end already, as they ought to be, according to the *dictum* of the Court. But, in truth, the only amount of ordering sufficient to necessitate a change of position from the North-end to the front of the Table, and, moreover, the very kind of ordering which is plainly contemplated by the Judicial Committee, in their argument, is the removal of the elements from the front portion of the Holy Table to the North-end of it; i.e., the removal of them from a place where, according to the view of the Court, they have no right to be, to a position in which they undoubtedly ought to have been placed, in the first instance. And we

are informed by the Court, that it was in order to enable the Priest to go through this most extraordinary and unaccountable proceeding, and for no other purpose, that the revisers of 1662 thought it necessary to frame the new Rubric before the Consecration Prayer, and to introduce into it that mysterious and perplexing clause about "the Priest standing before the Table." I confess that, as it appears to me, this whole theory has so much of the character of a *reductio ad absurdum*, and, in fact, so completely refutes itself, that it can scarcely be said to need any further refutation.

I think, therefore, we must clearly reject the view which regards the Rubric about "the Priest standing at the North-side of the Table," as ruling his posture and position throughout the whole of the service, and so, as ruling them during the Prayer of Consecration,—at least, as ruling them in the sense and manner contended for in the Purchas Judgment. I hope, too, that I have showed sufficiently, in an earlier part of my letter, the untenableness of that other view, which looks for guidance, on these points, to the part of the service immediately preceding the Prayer of Consecration;—I mean to the Prayer commencing, "We do not presume to come, &c.," which is ordered to be said "kneeling down at the LORD'S Table." And I really do not know of any other quarter to which we can look for guidance; except, indeed, we look to that which, as I sug-

gested before, we might naturally have expected to afford us the truest and safest guidance on these points; and which, one would have supposed, was expressly meant by the revisers of the Prayer Book to give us the instruction that we want; viz. the Rubric placed before the Consecration Prayer itself, and placed there, surely, for this and for no other purpose. And, as I have endeavoured to show, the only construction of this Rubric that seems consistent with grammar and common sense, is that which was given to it by the Judicial Committee in the Mackonochie case, and which interpreted the clause "standing before the Table" as applicable to the Prayer, as well as to the ordering of the elements; and which so ruled (indirectly) the front of the Table to be the proper position for saying that Prayer. We see, then, that this view of the question is not only one that seems to recommend itself to us by its own intrinsic reasonableness; but we are, I may say, absolutely driven, through the failure of all other possible alternatives, to accept it, as a logical no less than grammatical necessity.

But I have now to consider another point, on which the Court laid great stress in their Judgment. They contended that certain words (in a later portion of the Rubric) which imply that the Priest must "break the Bread *before the people*," render his position at the front of the Holy Table

an impossible one, and therefore clearly necessitate the North-end position, as the inevitable alternative. But let us examine this argument, and see what it is worth.

It is to be observed, then, that the argument is based upon two assumptions; 1st, that the words "before the people" mean "in the sight of the people;" and then, 2ndly, that it is impossible for the Priest to break the Bread in the sight of the people, while standing in front of the Holy Table. But I believe that neither of these two assumptions can be maintained. And I venture to hope that what I am going to say will sufficiently justify me in expressing that belief. In challenging their soundness, however, I will deal with the latter of the two first.

Then I maintain, first, that there is no reason whatever why the Priest may not break the Bread in the sight of the people, while standing at the front of the Table, even assuming that this action of the Priest must be done in the sight of the people. For I have myself known clergymen—one or two of them being persons of very great eminence and authority—who, believing that the Prayer of Consecration ought to be said in that position, and yet that the clause in question requires them to break the Bread within sight of the people, have made it a point to turn round, more or less, towards the congregation, just while they were in the act of breaking the Bread. And, without regarding this

as the right way of satisfying the requirements of this Rubric, I have no hesitation in saying that it renders the action of the Priest much more visible to the bulk of the people (if they wished to see it), than if he were standing at the North-end of the Table.

But, in the next place, I cannot admit the truth of the assumption on which this view is based, viz. that the Priest is required to "break the Bread in the sight of the people." For, first, if there be any duty of this kind laid upon the Priest, it must surely, of necessity, involve a correlative obligation, on the part of the people, to look at him during this time, and to see him break the Bread. But, if this be the case, it must be admitted that our laity are, for the most part, exceedingly remiss in the discharge of their duty. And not only so; but, as a general rule, the more devout they are, the more remiss are they wont to be. Nay, more; I may add, that none are apt to be so remiss, in this particular, as those who feel most intensely and profoundly interested in what is taking place at that moment. One can hardly, therefore, imagine that the revisers of the Prayer Book, when they inserted this clause about "breaking the Bread before the people," could have meant that the Priest was to make it a point to break the Bread in the sight of the people. On the contrary, indeed, I am of opinion that we must look for some other interpretation of those words "before the

people," if we are to have one that is really satisfactory and in fair harmony with all the circumstances of the case. And I do not think we shall have to look in vain. I believe there are more interpretations of them than one, that are, at any rate, decidedly more tenable than this which we have just been considering. And, if there be but one such, this would be quite enough to break the force of the inference which the Court has seen fit to draw from these words, as the words are construed by themselves.

But let us see what other constructions there are, which are fair and reasonable, and which are yet suitable for the purpose of my argument; i.e., which are honestly compatible with the supposition that the Priest, while "breaking the Bread before the people," may, nevertheless, be standing in front of the Holy Table.

And, first, I will refer to one, which is not only fair and reasonable in itself, but which is also strongly supported by certain facts connected with the revision of 1662, when this Rubric was first introduced into the Prayer Book.

Now it so happened that, in the Communion Office which was in use before this time, viz., that of 1604, there was nothing said in it, either directly or indirectly, about breaking the Bread. It was neither expressly ordered, as it is in our own present Prayer Book, in the marginal Rubric attached to the Consecration Prayer, nor yet was it even

obliquely alluded to, as in the present Rubric before that Prayer. And, accordingly, it seems to have been a not uncommon practice with the clergy of that period, for different reasons, as well as, perhaps, more frequently for no reason at all, except that of simple indolence and indifference, to omit the breaking of the Bread altogether from the public service, and to use no other fraction than what took place beforehand, in the vestry or elsewhere. But this omission was evidently regarded as exceedingly objectionable by many persons of very opposite schools of Theology. The Presbyterian Ministers, e. g., expressly complained, at the Savoy Conference, A.D. 1661,¹ that “the Minister’s breaking of the Bread was not so much as even mentioned” in the Prayer Book then in use—that of 1604; while, on the other hand, Bishop Cosin, in some private notes which he made, many years before the Savoy Conference, for improving that Prayer Book, and which were afterwards published in his works, says, “No direction is given to the Priest . . . to take the Bread and Cup into his hands, nor to break the Bread before the people, which is a needful circumstance belonging to this Sacrament; and therefore, for his better warrant therein, such a direction ought here to be set in the margin of the book.”² And then we have, in the new Prayer Book (1662), this entirely new

¹ See CARDWELL’s *Conferences*, p. 321.

² See *Works*, ed. 1855, vol. v. pp. 516, 517.

Rubric, containing Bishop Cosin's own words about "breaking the Bread before the people,"—words, it should be remembered, which had never before found a place (nor, indeed, any words like them, nor yet even a bare reference of any kind to the breaking of the Bread) in any of the previous reformed Prayer Books, from that of 1549 downwards. What, then, can we suppose that these words were intended to mean? Surely they were intended to mean, for one thing at least, that the Bread, instead of being broken, as it had often been heretofore, only before the service, in the vestry or elsewhere, should in future be broken in the Church, and during the public service, and as an essential part of the Eucharistic Office, and, in this sense, "before the people," though by no means necessarily in the sight of the people, or with the face of the Priest turned towards the people, in such a way as to be incompatible with his standing at the front of the Holy Table.

But, while I believe that this is one of the senses in which we may understand these words, "before the people," I do not suppose that it represents their only, or, perhaps, to speak more accurately, their whole meaning. They have, indeed, I am persuaded, a further and a fuller significance. They were meant, I believe, by Bishop Cosin himself, to have a distinctly theological import. And it should be borne in mind that they are his words, and, so far as one can see, his own sponta-

neous and unprompted words. They were not the words of the ministers at the Savoy Conference, nor yet those of any distinguished Protestant authority of an earlier date, nor were they even in any way suggested by them. They were, in fact, the words of the great Caroline High Church divine, Bishop Cosin himself, and no one else; and they occur, in their original form, in a document of the most private nature, and of a date long before the revision of 1662. We must, therefore, infer them to have been the unbiassed expression of his own independent and unfettered thought.

In order, then, to understand what is probably the full import of these words, it is necessary to bear in mind what were the peculiar views of Bishop Cosin and his school, as to the nature of the Eucharistic celebration. And we have the best possible reason for knowing that, in a certain sense, which I propose to consider more fully hereafter, but which I may here briefly describe as the primitive and Catholic, as distinguished from the modern and Roman sense, they believed the Holy Communion to have in it something of a sacrificial character. Supposing, then, that Bishop Cosin, the undoubted author of these words about "breaking the Bread before the people," attached, as it is tolerably clear that he did, a certain peculiar significance to the act of breaking the Bread, believing it to be, in the true, primitive sense, a sacrificial act, done, in one point of view, "before the people,"

because done for them and in their name and on their behalf; but, in another and far higher point of view, done before Almighty GOD, Whose especial Presence¹ he believed—as nearly all devout Church-people do nowadays—to be more expressly represented at the Holy Table, in contradistinction from the rest of the Church, just as most people consider the Church itself to symbolise a more peculiar Presence of GOD, in comparison with the world outside of it;—supposing, I say, all this, is it not more than probable that Bishop Cosin's view would require, in order to make the action of the Priest at this time as reverent and as expressive and appropriate as possible, that he should break the Bread, not looking towards the people, but looking towards the Holy Table, and with his back turned towards the people, and yet, nevertheless, in this aspect of the question, doing what he did “*before the people.*”

But let me illustrate this point by an analogy, which I think is a fairly suitable one for the purpose. Suppose, then, that a number of persons were about to present a memorial, or petition, or congratulatory address, to the Queen. They must obviously choose some one to be their spokesman and representative, whose duty it would be to read it to Her Majesty. And this person would, of course, have to stand at their head, or *before* them, while he did so. But is it not equally certain and

¹ See Note A, in the Appendix, p. 133.

obvious that he would also, during this time, have to turn his face towards the Queen, and to turn his back upon them? Does this, however, make it at all improper to say that he reads the document “*before* the people”?

Or, again, to take another illustration, from a subject, perhaps, more nearly akin to the matter immediately in question. In Roman Catholic Churches, when a priest celebrates Mass “*coram Episcopo*,” or “*coram Summo Pontifice*,” after having first presented himself to the Bishop or Pope, as the case may be, for his benediction, he then proceeds at once to the Altar and says the whole of the Service in front of it, and with his back turned towards the person “*before*” whom he is said to celebrate. Why, then, should it be supposed that the Priest, in our own Communion Office, may not “break the Bread before the people,” or “*coram Populo*,” and yet at the same time have his back turned towards them?

For my own part, remembering the peculiar theological tendencies of the Revisers of 1662,—so fervently Catholic, while yet so undeniably Anti-Roman,—I cannot help thinking it extremely probable that they not only meant the Bread to be broken “before the people,” in the sense and manner just indicated, but that they had also the further intention of making an indirect protest, in these words, against the doctrines and opinions involved in private Masses, as well as in those

which are technically described as “before the Bishop” and “before the Pope.” For, as the celebrant is supposed in private Masses to represent no one but himself, and in the others only the Bishop or Pope “before” whom they are said to be celebrated, such Masses are obviously contrasted in the strongest possible manner with our own celebration of the Eucharist, which we are accustomed to regard so jealously as being offered always in the name and on behalf of “the people.”

And perhaps, too, I may point out here that a very remarkable confirmation is given to this view by the fact that, when Mass is celebrated “*coram Pontifice*,” or by the Pope himself, at St. Peter’s, or any other of the Roman Basilicas—where the Papal Throne is invariably placed in the centre of the Apse beyond the High Altar—the celebrant, whether it be the Pope or otherwise, performs the whole Service with his back to the Papal Chair, and looking right over the Altar into the very faces of the congregation, though still in such a way as to render it quite impossible either for them to see him or yet for him to see them, in consequence of the huge obstruction to the view caused by the Super-Altar and the various objects placed upon it. So, that, in fact, looking at the matter from the Roman Catholic point of view, the people are quite ignored in this kind of celebration. And accordingly, while there are usually, on these occasions, immense crowds of people, on the other

side of the Altar, they never seem expected to take the least part in the Service, except just at the moment of the Adoration of the Host, which is then lifted up by the celebrant sufficiently above the level of the Super-Altar to be brought within their view for that purpose.

Having, then, all these facts before us, and taking into account the peculiar views and tendencies of the Revisers of 1662, it does not seem to me that one is putting at all a forced or fantastic construction on the words "before the people," in supposing that, in conjunction with that other sense previously indicated, they were intended also to mean "in the name and on behalf of the people." And, in this point of view, they are, no doubt eminently suggestive, as regards the position of the celebrant at the time of consecration, though not certainly in the sense attached to them in the Purchas Judgment, but the very reverse.

In order, however, to appreciate the full value and significance of all the considerations here referred to, it is perhaps necessary to bear in mind what was the exact state of theological opinion, in this country, on the whole question involved in this controversy, at the time (1662) when this Rubric was put into its present shape.

It should be remembered, then, that there were in England at that time two very distinct and antagonistic lines of thought with regard to this question. One school of opinion seemed to look upon "the

breaking of the Bread," and in fact upon the whole Communion Service, as if it were little more than a kind of preaching, which addressed itself simply to the eyes and ears of the congregation, and had its beginning and end with them, and with their thoughts and feelings alone. The other school, on the contrary, regarded it as direct worship rendered to Almighty God, and, indeed, as nothing less than the very highest form of worship that can possibly be offered to Him upon earth. And they looked upon it, too, as worship, in the double aspect of prayer and praise. For they not only regarded it in the light of a solemn Eucharistic Commemoration, before God, of the Sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST upon the Cross for us; but they also deemed it to be the most powerful and effective mode in which men can plead before God the All-Atoning Merits of that Sacrifice, on behalf of themselves and their fellow-men. So that, indeed, to them the Communion Service, and especially that part of it which centres in the act of Consecration, was the very perfection and culmination, alike, of Prayer and Praise, "through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."

There were, however, doubtless, certain persons belonging to this latter school, who sometimes allowed themselves to use exceedingly unwise and improper language respecting the Communion Service; language that might, at any rate, *seem* to encourage the idea that they considered the service to be, in some sort, a repetition or renewal or con-

tinuation of the Sacrifice of our LORD upon the Cross; as though, indeed, that Sacrifice had not then been absolutely finished and perfected by Him, and as if it could be possible for anything that they might do to enhance, in the smallest degree, its intrinsic merits and value. There was, certainly, but very little real foundation for this idea, as regarded the great bulk of this school. Still there can be no doubt it was in some measure through a suspicion of their views rather tending to disparage the completeness and sufficiency of our LORD'S Atoning Sacrifice, that men of the opposite school were led to adopt the other extreme, of maintaining that the Commemoration of our Lord's Sacrifice in the Communion Service was not, in any sense, addressed or offered to Almighty GOD, but was simply presented to the eyes of the congregation, as a means of stimulating their faith and devotion.

But, indeed, the men of this school seem to have regarded worship, generally, of whatever form or description it might be, in nearly the same light. That is, they viewed it, not as an offering rendered to GOD, but as a mere instrument of human edification. And hence, of course, it was, that they so scorned the simple and chastened language of devotion contained in the Formularies of the Church, and delighted only in the impassioned and exciting utterances of extemporaneous worship (so called); in which it was thought to be of vital

necessity that the person officiating should have his face turned full upon the congregation; since *they* were, in fact, the true *audience*, to whose feelings and emotions the prayers were really, though, of course, not avowedly, or even perhaps consciously, directed.

Now, it will be remembered that, at the Savoy Conference, these two schools of opinion had a very excellent opportunity of confronting each other, in the persons of their natural representatives, the "Ministers," on one side, and certain selected Bishops and Clergy, on the other. The Conference, as I need hardly mention, was held under a Royal Commission, for the purpose of enabling the two opposing parties to consult, as to any practicable changes in the Prayer Book, preparatory to its final revision (in 1662) by the two Houses of Convocation. And a very significant and suggestive incident took place at this Conference, which seems to me to throw great light upon the point under our immediate consideration. The "Ministers," we are told, objected to the Rubric (in the Communion Service) which ordered the celebrant to turn himself to the people, at the Absolution; on the ground that, in their opinion, "the Minister turning himself to the people was most convenient throughout the whole ministration."¹ To this the Bishops gave the following trenchant, as well as comprehensive, reply:—

¹ CARDWELL'S *Conferences*, p. 320.

“The Minister’s turning to the people is *not* most convenient throughout the whole ministration. When he speaks *to* them, as in the Lessons, Absolution, and Benedictions, it is convenient that he *turn to* them. When he speaks *for* them *to* GOD, it is fit that they should *all turn another way*, as the Ancient Church ever did, &c.”¹ And, as we know, the obnoxious rubric was retained in the form objected to.

Now this circumstance goes far, as I think, towards showing that those who had most to do with determining the character of the last Revision, believed that the fittest way for the Priest to say the prayers in the Communion Service—and this would, no doubt, apply, in their view, with especial force to the Prayer of Consecration—was to say them with his face turned away from the people; to say them, indeed, looking in the same direction as the people, and therefore, obviously, with his back turned towards them.

But, if it does this, it must, also, I think, tend very much to support the view for which I have been contending, as to the sense that the Revisers of 1662 probably themselves put upon that clause in this new Rubric, about breaking the Bread “before the people.” And, if it does so, it must also further tend, in exactly the same ratio, to break the force of that adverse inference which the Judicial Committee, in the Purchas case, drew from this clause, with regard to the front position for

¹ CARDWELL’S *Conferences*, p. 352.

saying the Consecration Prayer. So that, if even we admit—which I am prepared to do—that the construction put upon this clause by the Judicial Committee is a possible one, as well as being, perhaps, the one most apt to suggest itself to the Puritanical mind; yet, on the other hand, I feel bound to maintain that, under all the circumstances of the case, the sense which I have ventured to put upon it is not only a far more probable, but also more intelligent and rational, interpretation than theirs; while, of course, it is so far from militating, like theirs, against the front position, that it tends entirely the other way.

But I have now to call attention to another expression in this same portion of the rubric, which will, I think, when regarded in the light of fact and history, give still further support to the general view for which I have been contending in this letter. I refer to the words that suggest the aim and purpose with which the Priest is to “order the Bread and Wine,” viz. “that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the people and take the Cup into his hands.”

And here, perhaps, I ought to observe, in passing, that there is no intimation given, in these words, that the Cup is to be taken into the Priest’s hands “before the people,”—which, I presume, there should have been, to bear out the view of the Judicial Committee.

But, leaving this point, I may remark that it

seems hardly possible for anyone who is at all versed in the history of this period, and of this particular controversy, to help being reminded, by this clause about "readiness and decency," of the very reasons that were assigned by Archbishop Laud, Bishop Wren, Bishop Cosin, and others, for saying the Consecration Prayer "before the Table," when they were charged with doing so, by their enemies and persecutors, some twenty or thirty years before, and when the rubric was certainly so much less favourable to this practice than it is now. Bishop Wren, in his defence before the House of Lords, in 1636, expressly justified his consecrating "before the Table," on the ground that, being of short stature, he did so "for the more conveniency of executing his office"—a fact, which was specially noted by the Judicial Committee, in the *Purchas Judgment*.

And, again, in the Consecration rubric of the Scotch Liturgy (1637), which, as we all know, had its origin with the same set of men, and which also notoriously and unquestionably contemplated the saying of the Prayer of Consecration by the Priest "before the Table," and with his back to the people, it is very significantly ordered that "he shall stand at such a part of the Holy Table, where he may with the more ease and decency use both his hands."

And, assuredly, if one may put this matter to the test of experience, I will ask anyone who has

ever seen a clergyman (especially one, like Bishop Wren, of short stature) standing at the North-end of the Table, with a huge cushion before him, and a very large book upon it, and then, beyond these, as I have sometimes seen, four patens, four chalices, and, perhaps, two or three flagons, on all of which it is his duty successively and severally to lay his hands in Consecration, how is it possible for him, in that position, to do what is thus required of him, with anything at all like either "readiness" or "decency"?

I really do not think that people, in a general way, reflect, as they ought to do, upon this aspect of the question. For, if they did, they surely could not fail to be struck with the absolute grotesqueness, as well as inconvenience, of this mode of performing so solemn a portion of the service. It is, of course, always painful to have to present any matter of this description in a light that at all approaches the ludicrous. But when we know how apt such things are to present themselves in this light to the minds of people of intelligence and sensibility, and this, too often, at the most trying moments and under the most distressing circumstances, notwithstanding their utmost efforts to resist the intrusion, it is surely the part of true reverence, no less than of wisdom, boldly to face this aspect of them beforehand; so that, if possible, one may anticipate and correct the evil, at its source.

It could only be with such an object as this, that

I should ever bring myself to treat of any point, connected with the subject now before us, in what could be called a ludicrous point of view. But it is with this aim that I would now venture to offer an illustration of the grotesqueness, as well as the inconvenience, of the North-end position for saying the Consecration Prayer.

My illustration, which will be in the shape of an analogy from common life, will be of a nature suited to the lowest possible views of the Holy Communion, and will, therefore, have the double advantage of being less apt to shock people's sense of reverence, and also of being more likely to tell upon the minds of those who take the lower views of this subject, and who are, speaking generally, the people most hostile to the front position for saying the Consecration Prayer.

Regarding, then, the Holy Communion merely in the light of a Commemorative Supper, let us suppose the somewhat analogous case of a great historical banquet, such as that which used formerly to be given every year, by the late Duke of Wellington, in commemoration of the Victory of Waterloo. And just let me ask, what would probably have been thought, by that very practical and hardheaded personage, of the sanity of his maître d'hôtel or butler, if, in serving the dinner, on one of these occasions, he had, first, with a great deal of fuss and trouble, huddled all the dishes together, at one end of the side-board, and then,

having planted himself firmly against that end, had proceeded to carve them from that position; and all, for that most admirable and exquisite of reasons—the reason commonly assigned for not taking the front position at the Holy Table—the fear of turning his back upon the people?

But I suppose no one could fail to be struck with the extreme puerility, as well as grotesqueness, of a proceeding like this. And I really believe it is only from the force of habit and from want of reflection, that people do not perceive the singularly inconvenient and abnormal character of the North-end position for Consecrating; especially, on occasions when the number of the Communicants renders it necessary to have more than an ordinary number of the Sacred Vessels in use, at the time of Consecration. I know that the sight of this arrangement produces upon some minds impressions of the most painful description; the more so, indeed, from their occurring at a moment when they are felt to be so particularly unseasonable.

Considerations like these appear to me to give peculiar expressiveness and significance to that clause about “readiness and decency,” in the rubric before the Prayer of Consecration; and they prove, I think, very forcibly, that that clause must be regarded as an additional ground for believing that the front, rather than the North-end, was intended to be the legal position for saying the Prayer of Consecration.

I ought not, perhaps, to leave this part of my argument, without noticing a very peculiar sort of inference, which has sometimes been drawn from the fact that Bishops Wren and Cosin, and others, are known to have assigned this particular reason of convenience and decency for their use of the front position, and to have seemingly ignored what is thought (and rightly thought) to be the higher ground of ritual and theological significance. It is argued from this, that they either did not attach much importance to this higher ground, and, probably, also, that they did not set any great value upon the front position itself; or else, if they did, that they were guilty of some disingenuousness, in having put forward the lower, instead of the higher, reason in its justification.

But it is surely a somewhat peculiar mode of reasoning to assume that one good argument is not perfectly valid for its purpose, because there may, perhaps, be a better one, to the same purpose, at the back of it, which a disputant, for excellent reasons of his own, does not think it desirable to produce upon every occasion, appropriate or otherwise. It should be remembered that, when Bishops Wren and Cosin, on certain memorable occasions, pleaded "readiness and decency" in justification of their use of the front position, they were defending themselves against the attacks of coarse and ruthless assailants, who would have received their higher reasons with simple derision and scorn.

And, therefore, as it seems to me, they acted rightly, as well as wisely and reverently, in withholding those higher reasons from such needless indignity. And, if they wanted any precedent or authority for doing so, I conceive that they had it in the conduct of our Blessed Lord Himself, Who, on more occasions than one, when He was disputing with the Scribes and Pharisees—the Puritans of His day—and when He had clearly before Him both a higher and a lower class of arguments, which He might have used in rebutting their assaults, purposely withheld the higher, and chose rather to place before them such as He thought more suited to the temper and quality of such antagonists.

But—to return to the discussion of the Purchas Judgment—we are now coming to another stage in our argument; viz. to the consideration of the weight which the Judicial Committee felt it their duty to attach to contemporaneous opinion and practice, as indicating the sense of the rubric in question.

Now I am by no means learned enough to say how far these things may properly be taken into account, in determining the *legal* construction of a penal statute, like the Act of Uniformity; which embraces, of course, both the text and rubrics of the whole Prayer Book. But, at any rate, there can be no doubt that, in gauging the moral signi-

ficance of any document, such matter is exceedingly valuable, when rightly used. I venture to think, however, that their Lordships have not altogether used it rightly in this Judgment.

And, first, I think they have attached too much importance to the mere opinions of commentators on the Prayer Book, like Wheatley and Nichols, who, if even they had agreed among themselves—which they did not—were not contemporary with the revision, but wrote fifty years after it, when Church practice and opinion had undergone very considerable modification, partly through the withdrawal of the Non-jurors from the Church, and still more, perhaps, from the sinister influence of William III. and his reign—not to speak of the evil effect, in another way, of the previous reign—on the religious opinion of that period.

But, besides this, it seems to me that their Lordships looked to only one side of the question for their authorities. If they had taken the learned canonist and divine, John Johnson, into their counsels, they might have seen that, at about the same date (1713), he gave to this rubric exactly the construction for which I am contending, and which the Court of Privy Council itself gave to it, in the Mackonochie case; viz., that the clause “standing before the Table” is applicable to the Prayer of Consecration, as well as to the ordering of the elements.¹

¹ See *Works*, vol. i., pp. 41, 42, Oxford Edition, 1847.

But, of course, no one can deny that there was a difference of opinion, as to the construction of this rubric, even among the High Churchmen of that period. And, not only so; but the Non-jurors¹ also, after they had left the Church and had thus become legally free from the obligation to conform to the Prayer Book, had a still more marked diversity of opinion and practice among them, as to the position of the celebrant; some of them maintaining a rigid adherence to the North-end position, from the beginning to the end of the Service; while others went quite back to the use of Edward the Sixth's first Prayer Book (1549) and stood, throughout the Service (as that Prayer Book enjoined), "afore the midst of the altar."

But, if even we look to the two cases of undoubtedly contemporary authority on which the Judicial Committee in the *Purchas* case relied, viz., those of Bishop Cosin and Archdeacon Pory (of Middlesex), I cannot help thinking that their Lordships have somewhat misread their testimony.

And, first, with regard to Bishop Cosin. In some Visitation Inquiries (A.D. 1627), the Bishop (then Archdeacon) says, "Doth he (the Minister) stand at the North-side of the Table, and perform all things there, but when he hath special cause to remove from it, as in reading and preaching upon the Gospel, or in delivering the Sacrament to

¹ See Appendix B, p. 144.

the communicants, or other occasions of the like nature?"¹

Now their Lordships seem to have overlooked a very vital point in this inquiry, viz., the force of the expression "*other occasions of the like nature.*" For, even according to their own view, these "*other occasions,*" on which the Priest is to be withdrawn from the North-side, include both the time when he at first places the elements on the Holy Table, and also the few moments during which he is afterwards to "order" them, or, as they seem to understand the matter, to remove them from the front (or middle) of the Table, to the North-end of it, previous to consecration. Why, then, may not these "*other occasions*" just as well include the time when he is saying the Prayer of Consecration? It is certain that Bishop Cosin himself was charged, before the House of Lords, in 1628 (the very year after the date of these Visitation Inquiries), with saying that Prayer "before the Table"; and this, too, it should be remembered, more than thirty years before the present rubric was in existence, and under a rubric that was by no means so favourable to the practice in question, as the present one.

Then, as to Archdeacon Pory. It is true, as their Lordships remark, that, in his Visitation Articles of 1662, he speaks of "the Minister's standing, as he is appointed, at the North-side or

¹ BISHOP COSIN'S *Correspondence*, part i., p. 106. Surtees Society.

end of the Table, when he celebrates the Holy Communion." But there can be no doubt that the rule supposed to be involved in these words must be interpreted, like Bishop Cosin's query, and indeed like every other form of words that can be conceived of, as subject to the inevitable condition—*exceptis excipiendis*. And why are we to take it for granted—when this is the very thing to be proved—that the *excipienda*, in the present case, were not meant to take in the Prayer of Consecration? And why are we then, upon this assumption, to conclude that Archdeacon Pory meant to assert or imply that the Prayer might *not* be said—according to the practice of Bishop Cosin, the undoubted framer of this rubric—"before the Table"? Is it not much more likely that the Archdeacon's inquiry was directed against a practice that was not only very much used, but also vehemently maintained and defended, by the school opposed both to Bishop Cosin and himself, viz., that of saying the first part of the Communion Service at the Reading Desk,¹ instead of the Holy Table?

What, then, after all, does the evidence of these Visitation Inquiries really amount to, when we have, in manifest contradiction to what they are assumed to indicate, the admitted practice of Bishops Wren and Cosin, who were, as everyone knows, the two most prominent and influential persons

¹ See CARDWELL'S *Conferences*, p. 307, § x.

connected with the last revision of the Prayer Book, and whose practice must, therefore, be a very important consideration, with regard to the interpretation of this particular rubric.

I believe I have now gone through all the principal points in the Purchas Judgment, so far as it relates to the position of the celebrant, and may, therefore, proceed to state what I believe to be the practical result of my argument.

The Judicial Committee ruled that the front position for saying the Prayer of Consecration is *not lawful*. My argument, as I venture to believe, justifies the conclusion that it *is* lawful, even if it be not obligatory. For my own part, however, I should not go so far as to press the point of *obligation*, unless one were *forced*, by some strongly antagonistic influence, into the dilemma of having to accept, absolutely and without any freedom of choice, *either* the Front position *or* the North-end. If, indeed, we were really placed in this dilemma, I should see no way out of it, but to accept the Front, as the legal position. In other words, if people *will* have strict law, without any liberty, and are to have *good* law, I believe they must accept that as the present law of the Church of England. But, for myself, I will frankly own that, on this point, I do not contend for law, but for liberty. For while I am fully persuaded that the Front position is lawful, and even more than lawful, I am

quite prepared to leave room, for those who desire it, to use the North-end. Nay more, I believe that such room was deliberately intended to be left for them, by the Revisers of 1662.

Looking, indeed, as calmly and dispassionately as I am able to do, at all the facts of the case, I can arrive at no other conclusion than that the Rubric in question was meant by Bishop Cosin—the undoubted framer of it—not only to permit, but even to suggest,—to those, at least, who could read the suggestion,—that the Prayer of Consecration should be said by the Priest, “standing before the Table,” and having his back turned towards the people. But, more than this, I believe that this rubric, interpreted with strict regard to grammar and logic, has most effectually accomplished that purpose. On the other hand, however, I am fully persuaded that Bishop Cosin, and those other persons who were responsible, with him, for the wording of this rubric, took care not to introduce into it any language that should too absolutely, or, at any rate, too obtrusively, enforce the Front position upon a Priest, against his will.

And here, perhaps, I may observe that, as it seems to me, there may be three different degrees of stringency applied to the framing of any rule or order of this description. It may be framed, e.g., so as to enforce something, without the slightest deviation or alternative. Or, it may be designed to suggest, without absolutely en-

forcing, it. Or, lastly, it may be intended only to permit, without either enforcing or even suggesting it. Now, I will freely admit that I do not think the words of the Rubric so absolutely explicit and unequivocal as to leave no possible escape from the necessity of Consecrating "before the Table." But I think that a very little alteration would have made them so. If, e.g., they had run thus—"Then the Priest, standing before the Table, shall so order the Bread and Wine that he may with the more readiness and decency break the Bread before the people and take the Cup into his hands, and shall say the prayer of Consecration, as followeth,"¹—I do not see how the necessity could have been at all honestly evaded. But I do not think that the Revisers ever intended to have this method enforced upon an unwilling Priest. And, therefore, I believe they purposely left the Rubric just so far indefinite, as to avoid doing this needless violence to the feelings and convictions of any such person.

¹ It is remarkable how very closely this arrangement of the words resembles the form recommended for this rubric by Bishop Wren, in his MS. Notes on the Prayer Book, just published (by Murray) under the admirable editorship of the learned Bishop of Chester. It is as follows: "Then the Priest standing before the Table shall so order and set the Bread and Wine that, while he is pronouncing the following Collect, he may readily take the Bread and break it, and also take the Cup, to pour into it (if he pour it not before) and then he shall say,"—here follows the Consecration Prayer. (See p. 81.) The existing form of the rubric, which was, no doubt, Bishop Cosin's, was adopted, I suppose, partly because it did not so clearly and unequivocally *order* the front position for saying the Prayer of Consecration.

On the other hand, however, I am perfectly convinced that the Revisers never meant to *enforce the other* alternative, of saying the Consecration Prayer at the North-end of the Table. If, indeed, as I hinted before, the Rubric had been,—“When the Priest hath, standing before the Table, so ordered, &c.”—I think the case would have been so far altered, as perhaps to *suggest* consecrating at the North-end, rather than “before the Table.” But, as it seems to me, the Rubric would have needed far more violent manipulation than this, to make it absolutely exclude the lawfulness of consecrating “before the Table.” Having, indeed, in express terms, once brought the Priest to the front of the Table, I do not see how it could have indicated any intention of removing him elsewhere, afterwards, without explicitly saying so. And there is certainly no such explicit order in the present Rubric.

On the whole, therefore, I am inclined to think that the Revisers constructed this Rubric (as well as some others) with great care and forethought, in the anticipation of better days for the Church and people of this country, than those in which their own lot had been cast. They were men, indeed, whom the craft and violence of their enemies had forced to be more or less astute and politic; and, as a better time had already begun to dawn upon them, they might, perhaps, have ventured to hope that Puritanical infatuation had

now nearly spent itself, and that a day was soon coming, when Churchmen would not reject everything that was Scriptural, Primitive and Catholic, just because misguided and ignorant men might see fit to call it Popish; but would gladly welcome the liberty which this and other Rubrics had been purposely framed to leave them, of embracing a more solemn as well as more expressive Ritual, whenever the calmer judgment and the higher spiritual intelligence and the more advanced religious knowledge of the period should have created in them a natural desire for it.

In saying this, I would not, of course, for one moment be thought to insinuate that the Revisers had the smallest idea whatever of leaving any opening for the introduction of a Romanising Ritual into the services of the Church. I believe, on the contrary, that they were as far as possible from feeling any such desire. And *they* knew, too, perfectly well—none better than they—what Romanism really was. And, what is more, they knew equally well what it was *not*. This remark, indeed, applies with especial force to Bishop Cosin himself. For, during the many years that he was an exile from this country, he was living at the French Court, in the very midst of Romanism; where he had the fullest opportunities of seeing it, in its best, as well as perhaps in some of its worst aspects; and where, also, if he had had any disposition to embrace it, he was placed under (per-

haps) the very strongest conceivable temptations to do so. But, in spite of all, we find that he stood firm to his ground. And when, at length, the Restoration enabled him to return home, he came back at once a Catholic and an Anglican. And when, soon afterwards, it became his duty to take a leading—indeed the *most* leading—part in the Revision of the Prayer Book, he does not seem to have had the slightest possible wish to infuse into it anything whatever of a Romanising character; though we may well believe that the earlier experiences of his life were not likely to have inspired him with any very strong desire to stamp it with the opposite extreme of religious thought and sentiment.

I know, however, that there are some people who reject absolutely the idea that rubrics could ever be left open or doubtful, in their interpretation. And they will go so far as to protest that such an idea is utterly repugnant to the very nature and purpose of a rubric, which, as they say, is to secure perfect uniformity in ritual observances.

But, it should be remembered that we are not now concerned with the question, what rubrics *ought to be*, but simply with, what they *are*. I shall have something to say, presently, with regard to the former question. But I must now confine myself to the latter point.

And, let me ask, will any candid and sensible

person venture to deny that, as a simple matter of fact, some of the rubrics are very obscure and doubtful in their meaning; and, moreover, that certain of them have been left so, after successive revisions of the Prayer Book, notwithstanding the various controversies to which their ambiguity had given rise in previous years? It is true that the rubric now in question is not one of the latter class, as it was an entirely new one at the last Revision. But will any man of plain common sense be so bold as to affirm that the meaning of this rubric is *perfectly* clear, either one way or the other? Can there be any doubt, indeed, that it might have been made far clearer, either one way or the other, than it is, with the greatest possible ease, and with the slightest conceivable amount of skilful manipulation? And yet it was not made so,—not, I believe, for *want* of thought and consideration, but the reverse. And the same thing, too, I have no doubt, may be said, of other rubrics, besides this.

But, again, what a vast multitude of points there are, on which we have no directions, in the Prayer Book, of any sort whatsoever, explicit or otherwise. E. g., there are none, as to whether the officiating clergyman is to say Morning and Evening Prayer, and the Litany, with his face towards the people, or with his back towards them. It is true that the Priest is told, at certain parts, to turn himself towards the people; but no directions are given with regard to other parts. And, as to

the Litany, we can only infer what ought to be done, from certain Royal Injunctions, and a rubric in the Communion Service, as these may be interpreted by ancient and traditional use. Then, again, we have no directions, as to turning to the East, or not turning, while we say the Creeds; nor, as to the position of the "Minister" (not being the celebrant), who shall lead the general Confession in the Communion Service; nor, as to the place where the Epistle and Gospel are to be read; nor, as to the position and posture, during the rest of the Service, of those who have to read them; nor, as to the way in which the celebrant is to give the Blessing at the end of the Service; nor, in short, with regard to a vast number of other things, both in the ordinary and in the occasional services of the Church. And yet there cannot be a doubt that, in each of these particulars, the officiating clergyman must, of necessity, adopt some mode or another of doing what he has to do. He must use some posture and position, whatever it may be. And he must, obviously, too, have his face turned in either one direction or another,—unless he were able to get rid of it, for the occasion. But all these points, as the law now stands, are left absolutely to the discretion (or indiscretion) of the officiating clergyman, whether he be Bishop, Priest, or Deacon.

And what, let me ask, is the result of this, in actual practice? It is this,—that you may go into an almost indefinite number of Churches (including

even our Cathedrals), and you will find no two of them at all alike, in their mode of celebrating Divine Service. And, what is more, you will probably find the greatest and most startling diversity of all, in the various ways in which our respective Chief Pastors administer the Rite of Confirmation. And yet, who can say, at least, with regard to the great majority of the diversities one sees in this way,—that they involve any violation of rubrical law,—at all events, such violation of it as would challenge the intervention of an Ecclesiastical Court? Can we, then, in the face of all these facts, accept such a monstrous theory of ritual uniformity, as would seek to enforce, by the severest penalties, one and only one construction of a confessedly obscure and ambiguous rubric; and especially, too, when we have the best reason for believing that such rubric was purposely left ambiguous, in order to allow the very forms of diversity which these penalties would be invoked to repress?

I come now to a point, which, though very important in itself, was but incidentally involved in the Purchas Judgment, and which, therefore, I had to pass over in my main argument, reserving it for future consideration, and allowing it, in the mean time, to be taken for granted, for the sake of argument.

The point referred to is the assumption, on the

part of the Court, that the North-side of the Table means the North-end. And the simple truth is, that this assumption cannot be justified. The North-side, indeed, cannot be the North-end, for this obvious reason, that the sides and the ends of such a Table are two entirely different things. It is true that, if one were speaking, mathematically, of a parallelogram, one might say that it had four sides. But, speaking practically, and in ordinary language, of an oblong table, we can only say that it has two sides, with two ends.

And it must not be supposed that this is any mere verbal cavil, on my part. For it is, on the contrary, a very important practical question, with a very interesting and remarkable history,—which I will now endeavour briefly to state.

In the first Reformed Prayer Book (1549),—which assumed that the Altar or Holy Table should continue to occupy its accustomed place, at the East-end of the Chancel,—the Priest was ordered by the Rubric to say the Communion Service “standing¹ humbly afore the midst of the Altar.” But, in the next Prayer Book (1552), the position of the Holy Table—at least, during “the Communion time”—was changed; and, with it, the position of the Priest also. That is, the Table was ordered to “stand² in the body of the Church, or in the Chancel, where Morning and

¹ CARDWELL'S *Liturgies of Edward VI.*, p. 267. Oxford. 1838.

² *Ibid.* p. 267.

Evening Prayer was appointed to be said." And this, if we refer back,¹ we shall find to be "in such place . . . as the people might best hear." And we know, from contemporary practice, that this place was supposed to be right down among the congregation. So that, in fact, the Holy Table was to be taken "at the Communion-time," and was actually taken, at that period, in supposed conformity with these rubrics, into the midst of the congregation; where, of course, it could only stand with its two ends East and West, and with its two sides North and South. And, then, the Priest was directed to say the Communion Service, "standing² at the North-side of the Table,"—which was thus, manifestly, a real side, and not a mere end.

Now there can be no doubt that the Revisers of 1552 intended by these alterations to symbolise a complete and radical change in the very substance and meaning of the Communion Service itself. It was, indeed, obviously their intention to expunge from the service, as far as they could, not only every particle of the character of a Sacrifice, but even every element and semblance of a Sacrament also,³ as that word is explained in our Catechism.

¹ CARDWELL'S *Liturgies of Edward VI.*, p. 24. Oxford. 1838.

² *Ibid.* p. 267.

³ This latter point is illustrated still further by the change which they made in the words of distribution. For these words were no longer to be, as they had been,—“The Body”—“The Blood”—“of our LORD JESUS CHRIST . . . preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” But they were to be, simply,—“Take and eat this”—“Drink this”—“*in remembrance, &c.*”; shewing that the Revisers of 1552

It was scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, that those who held higher views on this subject, should do their utmost to get this order of things reversed. And this was attempted, as we know, by means of Royal and Episcopal Injunctions, and by such devices as inclosing the Holy Table with rails. And, although there is very good reason for believing that, up to the time of Laud, the custom of moving the Altar into the Church, or at any rate placing it with the ends East and West, instead of North and South, "at Communion time," was almost universal, still there were, from time to time, a few clergymen, who stood out against the general custom, and who never allowed the Altar to be removed, whether during the celebration or otherwise, from its normal position against the East wall of the Chancel.

One very notable instance of the kind was that of the Vicar of Grantham, in 1627, whose case gave rise to a very long and interesting controversy. In fact, Bishop Williams (his Diocesan) protested most vigorously against this alleged innovation, and he did so specially on the ground of the rubric about "standing at the *North-side* of the Table." He said,—

"This Table must not stand altarwise, and you at the *North-end* thereof; but tablewise, as you must officiate at the *North-side* of the same."

contemplated nothing more in the Service than a mere Commemorative Supper. In the next Revision (1559) *both* forms were *combined* into one, as we have them now,—thus conveying a very different meaning.

Here, then, was a very clear and marked distinction made between the sides and the ends of the Holy Table, and insisted upon, too, in a very practical way. And this was done, it should be remembered, on the Puritan side of the question.

There appear, also, to have been examples of this same argument being brought forward by the Puritans, in opposition to the order of their Bishop to place the Holy Table altarwise. And there is one memorable instance of some Puritan Churchwardens, in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, about this time, introducing into their Parish Church a square table,¹ instead of an oblong one, so that the minister might stand at the North-side of it, while placed in that position.

But there can be little doubt that the justice and force of this distinction was felt by the High Church party themselves. For we have proof that they did their best to obviate its practical effect, by means of new and amended Rubrics.

In the first place, we find a new rubric introduced into the Scottish Prayer Book (1637),—probably at the instigation of Archbishop Laud,—having manifestly this object in view. It enjoins that “the Holy Table . . . shall stand at the uppermost part of the Chancel or Church; where the Presbyter, standing at the North-side or end thereof, shall say the LORD’S Prayer, &c.”

¹ This Table was afterwards reported to the Bishop as being “like an Oyster Table.” See *Speeches and Passages of this Happy Parliament*, p. 320. 1641.

And then, afterwards, we find an unsuccessful attempt made, at the last Revision of the Prayer Book (1662), to get the corresponding rubric of our own Communion Service altered in the same sense. The history of this attempt is exceedingly curious and interesting. The evidences of it are to be found in that copy of the Prayer Book of 1604 (printed in 1636) which was used by the Revisers of 1662, as the basis of their revision, and which was reprinted, a few years ago, with an exact facsimile of all their MS. corrections and suggestions, by order of the Ritual Commission. In that Prayer Book are to be found, in the margin, opposite the old rubric on the position of the Altar "at Communion-time," the following words, in MS., by way of suggestion for a new rubric :

"The Holy Table . . . shall stand in the most convenient place in the upper end of the Chancel (or of the body of the Church where there is no Chancel)."

But a pen was afterwards drawn through these words, as they do not seem to have met with the approval of Convocation, and the old rubric was allowed to stand as it was before.

But, further, in the text of another part of the same rubric, there is a very significant erasure and MS. correction, which, no doubt, contemplated the same object, and which had also to be cancelled for the same reason. In the clause "standing at the North-side of the Table," the word "side" is erased with a pen, and the word "end" is written above it. But this change also seems to have been

disapproved of, as we find that the word "end" is afterwards cancelled, and the word "side" re-inserted in MS. over it.

In Bishop Cosin's own Annotated Prayer Book (preserved at Durham) which is, no doubt, the original source of the MS. corrections and suggestions contained in the Prayer Book here referred to, there is a proposed emendation, which is even more significant than the one just described. After having erased the word "side," and substituted "end," the Bishop altered it afterwards to "side *or* end," and then, ultimately, both emendations had to give place to the original word "side," as Convocation would not agree to any alteration whatever, in this rubric.

There can be little doubt that the chief opposition to all these suggested alterations arose from the Puritan party, though I can quite imagine that it may not have been altogether discouraged by the more decided members of the opposite school. But, at all events, the whole proceeding serves to show very clearly the importance, as well as the reality, which was attached by both parties to the distinction between the sides and the ends of the Holy Table. And it seems, moreover, to show, quite as clearly, that, while the High Church party felt most keenly and painfully the force of this distinction, and did their utmost, at the Revision of 1662, to get rid of its practical and legal effect, yet they found themselves, after all, utterly

unable to do so, either by securing the substitution of "end" for "side," or even by obtaining the admission of "end," as an alternative with "side." And hence it has come to pass that we have now the phrase "North-side," standing in our authorised Communion Service, with this particular meaning stamped upon it, and stamped on it, too, all the more definitely and indelibly, from the very efforts that were so strenuously made to obviate it.

There can be no doubt that the defeated party in this struggle chose afterwards to treat the terms "North-side" and "North-end" as equivalent and convertible. But their doing this could not really make them so. The distinction, indeed, had been clearly recognised by both parties, and had formed the common ground, on which both the High Church party had striven to obtain a change in the rubric, and the Puritans had successfully resisted it. And one certainly cannot much appreciate the logic of a position, which, having first discarded the formula, "side" = "end," as one of its premisses, should afterwards accept "North-side" = "North-end," as a legitimate conclusion.

And, now, let us see how all these facts bear upon the Purchas Judgment.

It will be remembered that the Judicial Committee, rejecting the guidance of the Consecration Rubric itself, as to the position of the celebrant while consecrating, referred us back to this very

rubric, at the beginning of the Communion Service, about "standing at the North-side of the Table." And it must also be borne in mind that their Judgment distinctly assumes, throughout, that the Holy Table ought to stand, as it does universally in the present day, close to the East wall of the Chancel, having its ends North and South, and its sides, of course, East and West. But, if we take into account the distinction so clearly recognised and acted upon by both parties at the Revision of 1662, between the ends and the sides of the Holy Table, showing that the ends were not to be taken for sides, nor the sides for ends, it would seem that the Judicial Committee, in proposing to place the Priest at the North-side of the Table, are really proposing an impossibility. Indeed, it is not in his power to stand at the North-side, for the very best and simplest of all reasons, that there is no such side to stand at. For, if he stand at the North, he will be at the end, and not at the side; and, if he stand at the side, he will be at the West, and not at the North part of the Table.

So long, therefore, as the Altar remains in its present position—and I do not suppose that any one in our day will have the courage to propose any alteration in this respect—there can manifestly be no legal compulsion to use either the North-end or the West-side, even for the earlier portion of the Communion Service. For as we cannot use *both*

the North *and* the side, we seem to be left free to take our choice between the two. And, if anything more is to be said in favour of one than of the other, it would seem to be in favour of the West-side or front. For, as the *original* "North-side" theory evidently regards "the Priest standing before the Table," as the most suitable and convenient position for him, it would, of course, follow that, if you shift the position of the Table, you ought to carry the Priest along with it, and in front of it. And, besides, there would be this further advantage in the arrangement, that the Priest would thus be able to order the elements and say the Consecration Prayer, "standing before the Table," without having to change his position. For the Consecration Rubric would, in that case, not *place* him "before the Table," but would *find* him there already.

I do not, of course, mean to say that this was the express intention of the Revisers of 1662. For, though I believe that they did intend to secure, and succeeded in securing, the legality of consecrating in front, and that many of them would also have preferred the West-side to the North-end for saying all the prayers in the Communion Service, still I think there can be no doubt that most of them were willing to sacrifice this latter point, and some of them even both points, in order to obtain the East-end position for the Holy Table, as the universal rule. But, if we look

to the actual result, in point of law, of all these controversies, and of the legislative action taken upon them, I see no other conclusion that we can arrive at, but that just stated; viz., that so long as the Holy Table is placed where it is, there is really no North-side of it, and therefore "standing at the North-side" is a simple impossibility.

I must not, however, conceal my opinion, that, if the old Puritan arrangement of the Table were now in operation, the whole of the rubrics would be at once brought into perfect harmony, though I confess it would be, to my own mind, harmony of an exceedingly discordant and offensive description. For the Priest could, then, not only say the first part of the Communion Service "standing at the North-side," but he could also say the Prayer of Consecration "standing before the Table," while still remaining at the North-side.

It was probably this consistency of the new Consecration rubric with the Puritan arrangement of the Holy Table, *as well as* the clause in it which provided for "breaking the Bread before the people" (i.e., in the public Service), that led Mr. Richard Baxter and his friends to pronounce the rubric "satisfactory," as we know they did.¹

¹ I ought not to pass from this particular part of the subject, without expressing my deep sense of obligation to my late lamented friend, the Rev. H. B. Walton, for his most invaluable work upon it. It is impossible to speak too highly of that work as a complete and exhaustive treatment of this part of the question. It is in the form of *A Letter to*

I have now done with the purely legal part of my argument, and must pass on to another and more interesting part of it. The position of the celebrant seems likely very soon to be made the subject of fresh legislation. Under these circumstances, the question presents itself before us in a new character, involving considerations somewhat beyond the scope of a mere legal argument.

Still, I cannot but feel that the state of the law on a point like this, must have a very important bearing on any future legislation respecting it. For there must, of necessity, grow, out of such a state of the law, rights and interests, which could never be justly ignored in future legislation. I have not the slightest doubt that there are some thousands of English clergymen, who, when they took Holy Orders, believed that they were entering on the possession of certain rights and liberties, with regard to the subject now before us, which, whether wisely or unwisely, they have been accustomed warmly to cherish and jealously to maintain, as their legally-assured heritage. And, if they were right in this belief,—as I humbly venture to think I have proved them to be; if, in other words, the existing law of the Church, properly interpreted and declared, does really give them what they believe it does, whether on one side or the

the Rev. T. T. Carter, on the Rubrical Determination of the Celebrant's Position. (Masters.) I would strongly recommend everyone who wishes to make himself thoroughly acquainted with all the more important facts connected with this controversy to read it.

other, I cannot persuade myself that our rulers in Church and State will harshly dispossess them of it, unless they see the clearest and most urgent necessity for doing so.

And this brings us, in fact, to the real question that will have to be dealt with, in legislating on this matter; viz., whether there is any valid and sufficient ground for dispossessing either one party or the other of their existing rights and liberties, with regard to this particular. Is there, indeed, any real necessity for altering the present state of the law, in the sense of prohibiting *either* the front position *or* the North-end, for celebrating the Holy Communion? In short, will Convocation and Parliament have occasion to do anything, in this matter, beyond simply assuring more clearly to both parties that liberty which (as I believe) the law now gives them,—though I admit that it does so in somewhat faltering and doubtful terms? For my own part, I cannot see that more than this need be done, and I will now proceed to give my reasons for thinking so.

And, first, as to the North-end, it is, perhaps, needless to say anything. For, so far as I am aware, no one desires to have the use of that position prohibited. Even those who are most thoroughly convinced both of the legality and the propriety of the front position, have no wish to see it imposed on their brethren, against their will.

For my own part, if I were able to enforce it on the whole clergy of England with the mere stroke of my pen, I would not do so. For I am convinced it is far better that a practice of this kind should grow spontaneously (if it will) out of a general appreciation of its intrinsic beauty and expressiveness, than that it should ever be the mere product of external compulsion.

I wish, however, that it had not been necessary to plead for liberty, on the other side. But there is, unfortunately, a keen agitation already set on foot, with the view, apparently, of inflaming public opinion, and of browbeating Convocation, if not Parliament, into a course of action, which would, I think, be as unjust, as it would be illiberal, impolitic, and adverse to the highest interests of religion and truth.

Still, I have no doubt that many persons have been led to take part in this agitation, through a very excusable ignorance of what it really is, that they are seeking to repress. And, therefore, I trust that I may be doing a service to them, as well as, perhaps, to others, if I try to place the matter before them in its true and proper light.

I am anxious, however, to make one remark, before I proceed to my task; viz., that, if, in the course of what I have to say, I should sometimes make comparisons or use arguments that seem too decidedly hostile or disparaging to the North-end,

it is not, in the least, because I would suggest that that position should be legally prohibited; but, only to show that it lacks such undeniable and overwhelming superiority, as could alone justify its being legally enforced, to the exclusion of the rival position.

It will be observed that I speak here of only two alternatives, i. e., the front and the North-end; and I do so, because I conceive that only these two positions can, for a moment, be entertained. With regard to the South-end, indeed, it is never once mentioned, or even suggested, in the Prayer Book, either for the celebrant, or any of his assistants. And, as to the other and only remaining alternative,—the East-side,—this is a manifest impossibility, so long as the Holy Table continues to be placed (as it is always now-a-days, and seems likely to be, to the end of time) against the East wall of the Chancel.

I will now, therefore, proceed at once with the remaining portion of my task; the object of which is to inquire, as briefly as possible, into the intrinsic merits and demerits, respectively, of the two and only two available positions, i. e., the North-end and the front;—not, however, with the view of advocating the prohibition of either, but simply for the purpose of vindicating, for the front, a legal co-existence with the rival position.

And, first, let us inquire what there is to be said

in favour of the North-end. Let us see, at least, whether there is anything to be said for it, of sufficient weight to justify the legalisation of that position, to the exclusion of the other.

The principal thing, I suppose, to be said for it, is that it is *not* the front. For I do not imagine that any sane person would ever have thought of choosing the North-end, for its own sake. It could only have been because there was some reason, or supposed reason, for wishing to avoid the front. Anyone, indeed, who was going up to the Holy Table, from a Western direction, to perform any sort of ritual act there,—supposing the Table to stand lengthwise against the East wall of the Chancel,—would, naturally, in the absence of weighty reasons to the contrary, go and take up his position at its West-front, and not at either of the two ends.¹ The North-end, therefore, being essentially an abnormal position, has to make out a case for itself, by means of an exclusive argument against the Front. In other words, since there are only these two positions to choose from, and since one of the two—the North-end—cannot assert for itself a normal aptitude for the purpose contemplated, while the other can do so, it

¹ As an illustration of this, I may mention that I do not remember to have ever seen anyone, in the whole course of my life, when placing the Alms, or the Bread and Wine, on the Holy Table, go to either the North or South end of it, for the purpose; but, invariably, to the front.

becomes requisite, in order to justify a legal preference for the North-end, to show that there are such insuperable objections to the front, on other grounds, as to necessitate the use of the North-end, as an alternative, and as the only available alternative.

The chief arguments, then, in favour of the North-end, are of a simply negative character, and they resolve themselves, in point of fact, into objections against the Front. Perhaps, therefore, it will be well for me to reserve the consideration of these, till I come to discuss more expressly the merits and demerits of the front position.

I must not, however, omit to notice two arguments, of a positive kind, which have been alleged in favour of the North-end.

One of these is, that the North-end, under the Jewish Law, was the proper sacrificial position for the Priest, at the Altar of Burnt-Offering. But, strange to say, this argument is never, so far as I am aware, made use of, except by persons to whom the chief recommendation of the North-end is, that it is believed *not* to be the right sacrificial position, in a Christian sense. So that, in fact, the argument can evidently be no more than a mere *ad hominem* argument. And, even in that point of view, it utterly fails of its mark, for a very obvious reason. For, however appropriate that position might be for its purpose, under the Jewish Law,

when victims were offered, it should be remembered that there is no such offering of victims under the Christian Rite, and that there is, therefore, manifestly no parallel between the two cases, and that, consequently, no argument can be drawn from it, either one way or the other.

The truth is, that what the Christian Priest has to do, in the Holy Eucharist, does not find its parallel so much in what the Jewish Priest was accustomed to do at the Altar of Burnt-Offering, as in what the High Priest did, once a year, when he went into the Most Holy Place, and what our Blessed LORD does, in a far higher sense, perpetually, as our Great High Priest, in Heaven.

But there is another argument, of a positive character, in favour of the North-end, which we must very briefly notice. This argument, no doubt, owes its origin to the learned and saintly Bishop Andrewes. And it should be observed that, in order to give it any sort of force or significance, it requires the presence of a second clergyman at the South-end of the Holy Table. This combined arrangement, however, the Bishop compares, somewhat quaintly, to the Cherubims overshadowing the Mercy-Seat, in the Jewish Temple.

But, even if this comparison could be called an argument, in any true sense of the word, it is one that could only be adduced in support of the entire double arrangement, and not of the North-

end position, by itself, which forms but one half of it; the other half, indeed, being but rarely found in its company, at least, in country parishes, where usually the whole service is performed by one clergyman alone.

But the truth is, that it can hardly be called an argument, in any proper sense of the term, even as applied to the double arrangement. For no one would ever seriously have adduced it, beforehand, as a reason for adopting that arrangement, if the arrangement had not been already in use. It is, no doubt, to be regarded as a pious afterthought, on the part of the good Bishop, rather in illustration, perhaps, than in justification, of a pre-existent fact.

And yet, even in this point of view, I cannot but think that the idea is founded upon a misconception, or, rather, perhaps, upon an oversight. For the Cherubims, overshadowing the Mercy-Seat, are, I conceive, intended to denote a Presence coming down from above, and bringing with it grace and blessing to men below; whereas the two officiating clergy, standing at the two ends of the Holy Table, could, at best, only be regarded—and this, too, by a great stretch of imagination, and by a very forced construction indeed,—as symbolising the approach of men, with and on behalf of their fellow-men, towards the Divine Presence, bringing with them there the united offering of prayer and praise.

I believe I have now referred to the only reasons or considerations, of a positive character, which are ever adduced in support of the North-end position. And, certainly, no one can say that they go very far towards justifying the exclusive legalisation of that position. But, I suppose, the chief strength of the argument in its favour, may be said to consist of certain supposed grounds of objection to the Front. I cannot help thinking, however, that, when these come to be closely looked into, they will be found to rest almost entirely upon misconception of the true state of the case; and that, properly understood, they are so far from being real grounds of objection to the Front, that, on the contrary, they form just so many solid and weighty arguments in support of it. But let us proceed to examine them.

And, first, we will notice that (perhaps) most common, and, to unreflecting persons, most natural and obvious complaint against the Front position, that it places the celebrant with his back to the people, while saying the prayers. But, let me ask, what great sin or harm is there, after all, in this? For he certainly does not turn his back upon them, while he is speaking *to* them. And, if he only does so at other times, he does no more than just what the front row of the worshippers are doing, throughout the whole of the service, to all the rest of the congregation.

But, what is supposed to be the real meaning and force of this objection? Why, indeed, should the celebrant *not* turn his back upon the people, during the prayers? Is it that he is supposed to be offering some sort of indignity to them, by doing so? But, surely, it is too monstrous a thing to conceive of, that people, who call themselves miserable sinners, and who profess to be supplicating God's mercy, through the officiating Priest, as their duly-appointed spokesman and representative, should complain of his adopting towards them the only position that could ever be thought suitable to that character, under any other corresponding circumstances. Let us suppose, e. g., that a number of Her Majesty's subjects had incurred her displeasure, by some very grievous crime, and that they were permitted, notwithstanding, by an act of almost unprecedented condescension, to come into her Royal presence, for the purpose of imploring, in their own persons, the exercise of her clemency in their favour. They must, of course, have some one, either selected by themselves, or, more probably, appointed by the Queen, to stand at their head, and in front of them, as their spokesman and representative. And what, let me ask, would be thought of the sanity—not to speak of the loyalty or modesty—of these suppliants for mercy, if they should venture to remonstrate with their representative, for standing with his

back towards them, while he was presenting their petition, and should insist that, at any rate, he should turn one side of his person, even if he did not turn his face, towards them, during this time?

I know, of course, that it may be attempted to parry the obvious force of this kind of reasoning, by saying that the person here supposed could not turn even his side, much less his face, towards these suppliants, without offering a gross and palpable slight to the Royal Presence; and, then, it would be implied (though, probably, no one would dare to say it) that, in the parallel case, of a Priest offering up the prayers of the congregation, in the Communion Service, there was no Royal Presence to slight. But, is there not here a Presence infinitely higher than that of any earthly Sovereign—the Presence, indeed, of the KING of kings, and the CREATOR and LORD of the Universe?

But I shall, perhaps, be answered,—Yes, He is, of course, Present, because He is Present everywhere. But I will ask,—Is there not a special sense, in which He is Present in certain places, and at particular times? Can any one believe the Word of GOD, and doubt this? Will any well-instructed Churchman, at least, deny that He is thus Present,—Present, e. g., specially in His House, and yet *more* specially Present at His Holy Table,—*His Own* Table? For do we not all agree

in calling it “the LORD’S Table;” and is it possible that we can use that name and mean nothing by it?

But, if we believe Him to be, in this more special sense, Present at His Holy Table, can we doubt that He is even yet more eminently so, when His people are “gathered together in His Name” around His Table, to celebrate there the All-Meritorious Death and Sacrifice of our Adorable Redeemer for our salvation, and to feed there upon that All-Precious Body and Blood, which He has so graciously given, “to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that Holy Sacrament”? May we not well regard the Holy Table, on such occasions, at least, even if never else, as His Earthly Throne, and so, as the peculiar Seat of that Ineffable Presence, before Which we are permitted, in these blessed moments, to prostrate ourselves, as humble suppliants for His Mercy and Favour? Can we, then, be so heartless as to grudge that our representative at such a time should, for a few moments, turn his back upon us, in order that he may thus be able to turn, more unreservedly and entirely, body, soul and spirit, towards that Supreme and Infinite Majesty, before Which he is so graciously permitted to appear on our behalf?

It is scarcely necessary to mention that the Peers of this Realm never omit to bow to the empty Throne of the Sovereign, whenever they pass and repass it, on their way into and out of

the House of Lords. And shall we deny this lower meed of honour to the earthly Throne of the King of kings, on occasions when it would certainly be treason to believe that Throne empty, even if we may venture to believe it ever so?

But, even irrespective of the question of looking towards the Holy Table, in saying the prayers, I cannot but think it would be a great and real gain to the Church, simply regarded as a means of promoting juster ideas of worship and a truer spirit of devotion, among us, if all our public prayers, not only in the Communion Service, but in other services also, were said by the Priest with his back turned towards the people. We should, at least, be thus spared hearing ever again of such revolting abominations, as the prayers being read “*impres- sively to*” the people. Thank GOD, we do hear less of such things, now-a-days, than we used to do, some twenty or thirty years ago. And there are other indications, too, of improvement among us, in the same direction. E. g., such evil devices for depraving the spiritual instincts of our people, as high pulpits, for sentimentally reciting or rhetorically declaiming the prayers, before a deeply-moved and admiring audience, have now, happily, well-nigh disappeared from our Churches, and come to be looked upon as among the wonders of a bygone age. But we can never, I suppose, regard our spiritual condition, in this respect, as perfectly sound and healthy, until we have come to

find it a positive comfort and relief to have the clergyman with his back turned towards us, while he is saying the prayers. For this is assuredly his natural and proper place, when he is acting as our spokesman, and addressing Almighty God on our behalf. For, his work, at this time, is not—as it is in preaching—to stir us up to a spirit of devotion; but, it is, on the contrary, simply to give, on our behalf, a modest and natural utterance to those feelings of devotion which should properly be stirred up within us, before we begin to pray; and which, indeed, we should endeavour to bring with us, in the first instance, to our prayers, if they are to be anything but a mockery and an offence to Almighty God.

But, it is sometimes said that, when the Priest stands with his back to the people, while saying the prayers in the Communion Service, he cannot make himself properly heard by them, and that it is, of course, right that he should be heard by them, in the prayers, as well as at other times, if they are expected to take a rational part in them. Well, no one would insist, more strongly than I should myself, upon the necessity of the Priest's being well heard in all the public prayers of the Church. But the question to be determined, as regards the prayers in the Communion Service,—and this is the point with which we are more immediately con-

cerned at present,—is, not so much, whether they are likely to be well or ill heard, when they are said by the Priest standing in front of the Holy Table, and with his back to the people, as it is, whether they are likely to be *better* heard in that case, *or* when he is standing at the North-end. And this question resolves itself into another, viz., whether he is likely to be *better* heard when his voice is directed towards the East wall of the Chancel—as it will be if he stands in front; *or*, when it is directed towards the South wall—as it will be if he stands at the North-end.

And I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that he will be better heard in the former case, for this very simple and obvious reason, that, when his voice is directed towards the East wall, the sound will be thrown back from that wall straight upon the congregation; whereas, when it is directed towards the South wall, the sound will be thrown back upon the North wall, opposite, and will so be partially lost to the congregation. And I say this, as the result of an experience acquired by thirty years' use of the Front position; as well as from having made certain very special and most careful experiments, which it is, of course, in the power of any one else to make, if he chooses, for his own more complete satisfaction on this point. I think it not improbable, however, that those who usually bring this objection

against the front position, have never tried it themselves, and have, moreover, seldom, if ever, been present in any church where it is used.

I ought to observe, perhaps, that, in making this comparison, I am assuming that there shall be an equal amount of vocal power used in the two cases; though I fear that sometimes those who use the Front position have a childish and thoughtless trick of mumbling the prayers, as though they did not wish them to be heard, and so bring that position into needless discredit. I believe, however, that, if all the clergy, of every rank, from the Bishops, downwards, would only use a clear and vigorous monotone, in saying the prayers in the Communion Service, there would be no complaints about their not being heard, whether the celebrant stood at the front of the Holy Table, or at the North-end of it. But, unfortunately, although we are taught to consider this mode of performing the service as the best and highest mode,—being that which is universally employed in our stateliest and noblest churches,—yet, strange to say, it seems too often to be considered, by ecclesiastics who believe themselves to be above the grade of Minor Canons, that it is somewhat below their dignity to use this method. And, not only so, but the more exalted the rank of the person officiating is, the more unsuitable to his position is this best and highest mode of saying the services supposed to be.

And now we come to another objection which is often alleged against the front position, viz. that it is supposed to represent, on the part of those who use it, a belief in some kind of sacrifice in the Holy Eucharist.

But, let me ask, is there no true sense in which we *may*—nay, even in which we *must*—believe that there is something of the nature of sacrifice in the Holy Communion? For what, after all, do we mean by the word “sacrifice”? What is it, indeed, in its simplest and most elementary signification, but the *offering* of something to Almighty GOD? And will anyone say that there is *nothing* offered to Almighty GOD in the Holy Communion, but that everything that is said and done, in that high and holy Service, is said and done to man alone, and not to GOD? I cannot believe that any intelligent and well-instructed Churchman, at any rate, will seriously and deliberately say this.

But there are, as we all know, different senses in which it may be said that sacrifice or offering can be made to Almighty GOD. And these different senses of the word have, no doubt, given rise in many minds to a certain confusion of thought on the subject, which is, I believe, the real source of that objection to the front position that we are now considering.

Let us, then, inquire a little into these different senses of the word, and see if we cannot, perhaps, discover among them some one sense, if not more,

in which it is, after all, not so very dreadful to believe that there is some kind of sacrifice in the Holy Communion ; and this, too, such as may not only very well serve to justify the use of the front position, on the part of the celebrant, but such as may even positively necessitate his use of that position, for its adequate and appropriate expression.

And, first, it will be well to mark off those senses in which we do *not* believe that there is any sacrifice, either in the Holy Communion, or in any other portion of our Christian worship.

And, in the first place, there is, of course, no immolation of victims, such as we know to have been expressly enjoined under the Mosaic institution, and such as was also commonly practised by the early patriarchs and others, most probably under a like Divine appointment. This kind of sacrifice has, it is needless to say, entirely passed away, under the Christian Dispensation.

And, secondly, there is no Scriptural or Catholic authority, of which I am aware, nor, indeed, any other authority, better than that of the Council of Trent, for saying that our Blessed LORD Himself is “immolated”¹ in the Holy Eucharist, or that His Sacrifice upon the Cross is “renewed,”² or repeated, or continued, in that Divine Mystery.

¹ “Hanc sanctissimam Hostiam immolemus et offeremus.”—*Catech. Conc. Trident.* Pars II. *De Eucharistiæ Sacramenta*, § lxxxvi.

² “Cujus Sacrificium . . . in Eucharistiâ quotidie instauratur.”—*Ibid.* § lxxxiii.

For, in fact, we have the very highest possible authority for believing that His Sacrifice, in that sense, was completed and perfected in that tremendous moment when He Himself pronounced it “‘finished,’ and gave up the ghost.”

Again, I do not see how any Priest, or indeed, any other created being, can ever be said to offer Our Blessed LORD, in such a sense as he may be said to offer that which is his own, and which, therefore, it is his to give or offer. Doubtless our Blessed LORD gave Himself in this sense, and was thus given by the FATHER, but could not possibly be so given or offered by anyone else.

It may, perhaps, seem very unnecessary to disclaim a belief in sacrifice, in any of these senses, under the Christian Dispensation. But, unhappily, there seem to be no limits to the possibility of being misunderstood on subjects like this. I am aware, indeed, that people often have themselves only to blame for being so misunderstood. For, in fact, they provoke, even if they do not challenge, misapprehension, by their own reckless overstatements of the truth. How often, e. g. do we encounter most excellent people, who, with the very best possible intentions, will seize upon some highly rhetorical utterance of a great Christian Father, and will deal with it and argue from it, just as if it had been a carefully weighed and measured dogmatic formula of an Œcumenical Council! And what is the effect which such a proceeding

will be almost sure to produce upon the mind of a theological opponent? It will, of course, make him turn at once resentfully from even such measure of solid truth as may lie beneath the surface of the holy Father's pious rhetoric. And not only so, but he will, probably, insist upon believing that every one holding such truth must be deemed responsible for all the possible false conclusions that may be thus thoughtlessly deduced from it. And hence it is, that people are sometimes forced to make disclaimers, which might otherwise seem almost fantastically gratuitous and unnecessary.

But let us now proceed to consider some of the senses in which we may unhesitatingly believe that there *is* sacrifice under the Gospel Dispensation, and then see how these senses bear upon the question of sacrifice in the Holy Communion.

And, first of all, there is a sense in which undoubtedly every Christian man living is or ought to be himself a sacrifice, and a priest withal. So that, in this sense, there should be no lack either of priests or sacrifices under the Gospel Dispensation.

But, more than this, Christians are not only required to offer up themselves to Almighty GOD; i. e. they are not only to offer to Him all they are, but likewise all they have, and all they are capable of. And, while they are to be always doing this, all their lives long, and doing it as the habit of their lives, there are yet obviously particular occa-

sions, when they are required to do it with a more conscious and marked solemnity. E. g., they are, at certain appropriate seasons, to make special contributions of their worldly substance to Almighty GOD, in the sense of a more express acknowledgment that all comes from Him, and all belongs to Him. Then, again, they must, from time to time, offer to Him their more formal tribute of thanksgiving and praise, as well as of prayer, although they are, of course, bound, as Christians, to live unremittingly in the habit and spirit of praise and prayer. Then, again, there are certain periods, continually recurring in a man's life, when he will naturally feel prompted to renew the sacrifice of himself to Almighty GOD, by some fresh outward and solemn act of self-dedication.

Now, all these various forms of sacrifice are to be regarded, in the first place, in the light of private and personal acts, on the part of individual Christians; in which light, of course, they do not need the intervention of any earthly priest, but are performed, simply, by the individual himself, acting as his own priest.

But, then—to go a step further—there are obviously corresponding forms of sacrifice, which it behoves a Christian Family to offer to Almighty GOD, as a family. And, since these involve the combined action of a number of persons, they require, of course, for such combined action, a

centre of unity, or, in other words, a priest, who shall act for the whole, and who, from the nature of his action, as the offerer of the family sacrifices, must clearly be a sacrificing priest. It is needless to say that the natural head of the family is its priest, in this sense, and for all such purposes as these.

But, further, the same kind of sacrifices need also to be offered by the great Christian Family,—the whole Church, in its collective capacity,—if, at least, such a thing were possible. But, as this is not possible here upon earth, it has to be done by each separate congregation of the faithful, as the nearest earthly approximation to such a corporate gathering. But here, too, as in the family, there must needs be a centre of unity, a common medium,—a priest, in fact,—through whom the united sacrifice of the congregation may be presented to Almighty GOD. Such priests we have provided for us, in the Divinely-appointed Ministry of the Church. And, since it is a most essential part of their office to present the congregational sacrifices, they must needs be—whether we like that description of them or not—to all intents and purposes, sacrificing priests.

In every form, however, of Christian Sacrifice, whether it be personal, domestic or congregational, there is one grand characteristic, which must of necessity penetrate and pervade it, just so far it is Christian. And this is, that it must be offered

through Christ. Whatever intermediate priest, indeed, there may be, through whom it is offered, the final medium must be the One Great High Priest in Heaven. Nay, more; if it is to be really acceptable to GOD, it must be offered, not only through CHRIST, as the High Priest, but also in union with His Sacrifice,—His Own All-Prevailing, All-Hallowing Sacrifice of Himself,—Which, as our High Priest, He is Himself continually presenting before the FATHER, in that Holy of Holies Above, “where,” as we are assured, “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

But, when I say that every Christian Sacrifice, in order to be truly Christian, must be offered in union with the Sacrifice of Christ, I do not, of course, mean to imply that it can ever be in our power to offer the Sacrifice of our Blessed LORD, in any sense corresponding to that in which we may be said to offer our own sacrifices. That tremendous Sacrifice of His, indeed, was offered, (or made) once for all upon the Cross, by Him to Whom Alone it could ever belong thus to offer It. And, in that sense, It can never be offered again, even by our Blessed LORD Himself. But It may be *presented*, even by us, as It is ever being presented, silently, though All-Powerfully, by Him, in the sense of being appealed to and pleaded, as the One Sole Ground of acceptance for every sacrifice that we can properly be said ourselves to offer to Almighty GOD.

In that sense, however, doubtless, must every sacrifice of ours be offered (expressly or by implication) through CHRIST. That is, it must be offered through the Merits, no less than through the Mediation of CHRIST. Our sacrifices of Prayer are offered, for the most part, in express terms, "through JESUS CHRIST our LORD." For, with this, or some such formula as this, we are accustomed to end nearly all our prayers; while there is One Prayer,—our LORD'S Own Prayer,—which we actually begin with this kind of appeal to the Merits and Mediation of CHRIST. For, the very first word of that Prayer is such an appeal. We address GOD, indeed, there, as "*our*" FATHER, first, in the sense of His being "the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, of Whom the whole family in Heaven and Earth is named;" and then, next, as being the FATHER of each and all of us, *through* our LORD JESUS CHRIST. But, in this sense, of course, should every sacrifice that we offer to Almighty GOD, of whatever kind, be offered through CHRIST, if not in express terms, yet by an habitually recognised implication.

And now I think we have arrived at a point, where we shall probably not find it so very difficult to see the relation between Sacrifice and the Holy Eucharist. Seen, indeed, in the light of the foregoing remarks, the Holy Eucharist appears not merely to contain within it a certain scarcely

appreciable element of sacrifice, but it may be said to constitute, in itself, a complete epitome of every possible form and element of (properly) Christian sacrifice. For it embraces not only alms and oblations,—prayers, supplications and intercessions,—praise and thanksgiving; but also the surrender and sacrifice, on the part of each worshipper, of his very self, body, soul and spirit, to Almighty GOD; and this, too, under conditions the most sacred, as well as the most affecting, that can well be conceived. In a word, it may be described as the gathering into one solemn function of everything that can be truly said to have the nature of sacrifice, whether it be in Christian Worship, or even in the Christian Life.

But, what is, perhaps, to be most especially remembered, with regard to the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is this, that it is stamped, in a very peculiar manner, and in a very pre-eminent degree, with that grandest and principal characteristic of all true Christian Sacrifice,—I mean, that of being offered through CHRIST, and in union with His Sacrifice. There is, indeed, a very special, and I might even say specific, sense, in which this characteristic may be said to belong to the Holy Eucharist,—a sense, even above and beyond that in which it is applicable, to each of the other and subordinate forms of Christian Sacrifice. For, in the Holy Eucharist, not only is the Sacrifice of CHRIST presented, as It is in those others, but It

is also represented there, by means of symbols and a ceremonial, expressly enjoined by our Blessed LORD Himself, for that very purpose. Nay, more, the Holy Eucharist has this further peculiar condition attached to it, that, in response to that special Representation which we make, through it, of the Sacrifice of His Only-Begotten Son, GOD the FATHER gives back to us the very Realities therein symbolised and represented. He vouchsafes to us, indeed, the unspeakable privilege of feeding, in a spiritual and heavenly manner, upon the Divine Sacrifice Itself.

Now, I do not think that, in what I have here stated, I have at all exceeded the true Catholic Doctrine, or (what I believe to be the same thing) the Doctrine of the Church of England, on this subject. Nay, more; I cannot help thinking that what I have said would meet with the frank and hearty acceptance of a very large proportion of those earnest and good men, who are wont to claim for themselves the special title of "Evangelical" Churchmen.

I should like, then, to ask those excellent men, whether they can possibly think that what is said and done, by the celebrant, in this high and solemn service, is said and done to the congregation alone, or whether it is not said and done, in a far higher and truer sense, on their behalf, to Almighty GOD. Surely it cannot be believed that, when

our Blessed LORD first instituted the Holy Eucharist, and said to His Disciples, "Do this (εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν)¹ for a memorial of Me," He meant it to be done only before men, and not before GOD. And when, too, S. Paul says² to the Corinthian Church, "As oft as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do tell of (καταγγέλετε) the LORD'S Death, until He come;" we cannot surely suppose he meant no more than that they were thus to preach or proclaim that fact to the untaught and unevangelised world. For, in the first place, it may be said to be almost a normal condition of what they are here spoken of as doing, that it should be done only in the assemblies of the faithful, from which all else were carefully excluded. And, then, secondly, if we regard the Eucharist as nothing else than a mere proclamation, through visible symbols, of the doctrine of Salvation by the Death of CHRIST, I think it may be said, without presumption or irreverence, that it is by no means an effective instrument for that purpose;—not to speak, also, of the fact, that most of those who are supposed usually to have the opportunity of witnessing it, are accustomed resolutely to close their eyes, during the most solemn part of it; and this, too, not because they

¹ S. Luke xxii. 19, 1 Cor. xi. 24. Compare Acts x. 31, Isa. xliii. 26.

² 1 Cor. xi. 26. Compare Ex. xii. 13.

are ignorant of what is taking place, but just for the very reason that they know already so well its true import and significance.

Let us, however, only look at the Holy Eucharist from the other point of view, and consider it in the light of a solemn appeal, on the part of the congregation, to the Redeeming Love of the FATHER, in His own appointed way, through the All-Availing Sacrifice of His only SON; and let us regard the people as coming, in this way, with their own sacrifice, to the Divine Mercy-Seat; bringing, indeed, to that Mercy-Seat their alms and oblations, their prayers and praises, their surrender of themselves, in soul and body; with the Celebrating Priest at their head, as their representative and spokesman; and all uniting together to offer the joint and concentrated oblation, through the great High Priest above, and in union with His All-Meritorious Sacrifice; and then the Holy Eucharist assumes, at once, a character of dignity and grandeur, as well as of expressiveness and significance, which cannot well be exaggerated.

But, then, if we regard the Eucharist in this light,—and it is certainly, at the very least, an admissible Church-of-England view of it,—such a view must surely justify—yes, and more than justify—must absolutely demand—the use of the Front position, on the part of the celebrant, for its adequate and suitable expression. So that, in fact,

the true and Catholic, as distinguished from the perverted and comparatively modern Tridentine, Doctrine, on the subject of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is so far from furnishing any just ground of objection to the Front position, that it forms, on the contrary, as I conceive, an unanswerable argument in its favour.

But we are told by some persons,—and this brings me to the last objection against the Front position that I shall have to notice,—that, however significant and appropriate we may consider that position to be, in its relation to the ancient and Catholic doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, yet the position itself does not seem to have been the actual position of the celebrant at Holy Communion, in the primitive ages of the Church. We are informed, indeed, by these persons, that the ancient position of the celebrant was—not, certainly, at the North-end—but—at what we should call nowadays the East-side¹ of the Holy Table, i.e. at the back of it, where, of course, he would have his face turned full upon the congregation.

Now I venture to think that this is not a true representation of the case. It is founded, no doubt,

¹ It should be observed that, throughout this letter, I speak of the different parts of the Holy Table as North, South, &c., on the assumption which is clearly implied in the use of the term “North-side” in the Rubric of our Communion Service; viz., that all Churches are, as a matter of course, built East and West; though, as we know, this has never been the case *universally*, in any age or country.

upon certain well-authenticated facts. But these facts represent only a small part of the case. And, when they come to be carefully examined, and to be regarded in connection with other equally well-ascertained facts, and seen in the light of those facts, I cannot help thinking that they will assume an entirely altered aspect, and will rather point to conclusions the very opposite of those which it has often been attempted to draw from them, with regard to the question now before us.

And, in the first place, I may observe that, for the first three centuries of the Christian era, we have no direct evidence whatever, either as to the position of the Holy Table in the Churches, or yet as to the position of the celebrant, with reference to the Holy Table. We know, indeed, from heathen,¹ as well as from Christian authorities, that, during that period, there were a great number of Churches, though they had unhappily a very precarious existence. For, in the frequent alternations between crushing persecution and bare toleration, which Christianity had then to encounter, these Churches were continually being destroyed and rebuilt. But it is most probable that, just at the time when Constantine began his reign (A.D. 312), there were scarcely any publicly-recognised places of Christian worship left remaining, at least, above ground. Be this, however, as it may, we have but exceedingly little information

¹ See BINGHAM'S *Orig. Eccl.*, Book VIII., chap. i. 15.

as to what were the internal arrangements of these early Churches, and we have certainly none at all, as to the position of the Altar in them, and the consequent relative position of the celebrant.

But, there is one small item of information that we have on this latter point, in connexion with those subterranean places of worship, upon which the Church had so much to rely, during this period, especially at Rome;—I mean, of course, those of the Catacombs. In these sacred chambers, there were certain specially-honoured tombs—those of distinguished saints and martyrs—made in the form called *arcosolium*. They were constructed in the following manner:—In the first place, there was cut out of the solid (tufa) wall an arched space, the base of which would be about three feet higher than the level of the floor; then, under this arched space a cavity was formed (also out of the solid wall), in which the remains of the saint were deposited; and over the remains was fixed a slab, which served as the Altar, where the Holy Eucharist was celebrated.¹

Now, there can be no question that the celebrant, at such an Altar as this, must have officiated with his back to the people. I suppose many of

¹ There was a decree of Pope Felix (A.D. 269-275), ordering that in future the Holy Eucharist should always be celebrated over such burial places of holy men; and from this, doubtless, arose, afterwards, the use of stone altars in Churches, and the custom of depositing sacred relics within the Altars. See Mr. C. I. HEMANS'S *History of Ancient Christianity and Sacred Art*, p. 57 (Williams & Norgate), 1866.

the English Clergy of the present day, if they had been living then, would have declined to use such an altar ; and many of our laity also would have gone without the Holy Communion, rather than have communicated at such a service. But, be that as it may, such were the Altar and Service in use, in those days of the Church's greatest purity and devotion.

It might be said, of course, that this position for the celebrant was a necessity, incidental to the character and position of the Altar. But it still remains to be proved, that there was any necessity for having such an altar, instead of the more ancient wooden Table; or yet for having the Altar, though a tomb, in such a position. For we know that, in a century or two afterwards, they had, even in these subterranean Chapels, Altar-Tombs placed away from the wall, and could have given the earlier ones such a position, if they had chosen to do so, by simply excavating the tufa on the farther side of them, and so extending their Chapel in that direction, instead of the opposite one. But, they did not choose to do so; and this was, probably, because they had been accustomed, before this time, to use their wooden Table in a corresponding position, i. e., standing against the wall, with the Celebrant standing in front of it.

So much, however, for the first three centuries of the Christian era;—in which, as it seems to me, the only evidence that we have at all on

this subject, is decidedly in favour of the front position.

But I admit that a great change took place in the fourth century, and I will now proceed to speak of this change.

We know that, as soon as Constantine ascended the throne, an entirely new era commenced, in the external History of the Church. Instead of being oppressed and crushed, or at best coldly tolerated, as it had been up to this time, it became at once the dominant influence in the Empire. And, as the worship of the Church is, undoubtedly, its most distinguishing characteristic, and, I might even say, its chief *raison d'être*, it was naturally one of the first objects of the Emperor, to provide what he considered to be fit and worthy edifices for this purpose. We know that he began very soon and very promptly to build new and magnificent Churches, for the Christian worship. But, then, what was to be done, in the mean time?

In order to meet the exigency of the moment, he seems at once to have placed a number of the existing Basilicas, or Courts of Justice, at the service of the Church, and they were forthwith converted—no doubt, under his direction—into Christian Temples.

But, in their conversion, the Basilicas had, of course, to be treated with some regard to their original form and character; for it would obviously be a great point to adapt them to their new use,

with the least possible change in their construction and arrangement.

Now, the first and most characteristic feature of the old Basilica, which would have to be dealt with, was, no doubt, the elevated Apsidal Tribune, at the upper end of the building, with its thrones and seats, fixed (all round) against the wall, for the chief magistrate and his assessors. And, what could be a more natural use for these seats, than to place the chief rulers of the Church—the Bishop and his Clergy—in them? For, of course, the Altar could not be placed there, without removing these seats; and, as these seats formed an integral part of the wall, they could not well be removed, without a complete transformation of the character and structure of the building.

But, then, what was to be done with the Altar, which had hitherto been regarded as the central feature of every Christian Church? It was placed on a dais, in front of the Bishop and Clergy; so that they would face it, on one side, from their places in the Tribune; while, again, the people would also face it, on the other side, from their place, in the nave or main body of the edifice.

But, now would arise the difficult question—Where was the Celebrant to stand? What position was he to take up, at the Holy Table, under this new order of things? Before this period, he had stood at the Arcosolium-Altar, with his back to the congregation; i. e., having behind him, first, no doubt, the non-officiating Clergy, and then, beyond

them, the laity ; and standing in this position, with regard to them, as I should contend, on the principle that he was acting and speaking in their name, and as their representative. But what was he now to do, under the new Basilican arrangement, so different from the old one ? Here, indeed, he would obviously find himself in a most perplexing dilemma. For he could not, of course, in the same sense, and in the same manner, represent *both* the clergy *and* the laity. If he were to stand with his back to the Clergy occupying the Tribune, and in this way to represent them, he would clearly have to turn his face to the people in the nave, and so *not* represent them. And, again, if he were to stand with his back to the people in the nave, and so to represent them, he would as clearly have to turn his face to the Clergy, and so *not* represent them. What, then, was he to do under these most perplexing circumstances ?

I suppose that, if Dean Howson and his friends had been living at that time, they would have had a very easy solution to offer for the difficulty. They would, of course, have suggested, at once, a third alternative, viz. the North-end. But they were not then alive, and therefore not able to suggest it. And it does not seem to have ever suggested itself, for a moment, to the people of that day. For, in fact, it could have been no solution at all of *their* difficulty. They would feel that the North-end position represented neither one side, nor the other,—neither the Clergy, nor the laity,—nor yet

both. And it seems to have been felt as a necessity of their view of the matter, that the celebrant should distinctly represent *some portion* of the Congregation, as he could not properly represent the whole; that, in fact, he should *either* represent the Clergy, and celebrate *coram clero*, i. e. having his back to the Clergy; *or* that he should represent the laity, and celebrate *coram populo*, i. e. having his back to the people. And they seem to have decided the question in favour of the Clergy, as considering them *digniores*, in comparison with the people, i. e. the laity.

It was in this way, as I conceive, that this new disposition of the Altar, and of the Priest, in relation to it,—usually spoken of as the Basilican arrangement,—first came into existence. And it was, of course, not at all unnatural that the same arrangement should be at once adopted as the type for all the new Churches that began to be built immediately afterwards. That it was so adopted, indeed, we have the best reason to infer, from the descriptions given by Eusebius and other writers of the period, of the splendid Churches (called also Basilicas) which were built by Constantine, Paulinus and others, in that century.¹ We have,

¹ There is a curious fact, connected with the orientation of the Churches built at this period, and for some centuries afterwards, which, I think, throws considerable light on the point now under our consideration, and which also greatly confirms the view (for which I am contending) that this Basilican disposition of the Altar and Celebrant was an absolute novelty at that time, and involved nothing less than a complete revolution in the structure and arrangement of the Churches

moreover, some evidences (in the Catacombs of S. Calixtus, and S. Agnes) of a similar disposition of the Altar, which may, with tolerable certainty, be referred to the same date, or rather later. It occurs in two Chapels, which seem to have been used, for some centuries afterwards, for the purpose of commemorating the Popes, and other eminent persons who were buried in them. And it is also highly probable that, on certain special occasions, they were frequented for this purpose by the reigning Pope himself and his attendant suffragans and clergy. For, we learn that Pope John III. (A. D. 560–573) ordered Bread, Wine, and Lights to be provided, from the Lateran Basilica, for the use of these Chapels.¹

of the period. It was a rule laid down in the Apostolical Constitutions, (lib. II. c. lvii.)—which, whatever may have been the date of their compilation, undoubtedly reflect the state of opinion that prevailed before the beginning of the fourth century,—that Churches should be built with the Altar and Sanctuary towards the East. But we find it specially mentioned by Eusebius, Socrates and Paulinus Nolanus, (see Bingham, book VIII., c. iii., § 2), of certain famous Churches built at this time, that they were not so built, but with the Altar and Tribune at the West. And it is remarked, too, by the Rev. B. Webb, in his very interesting work on *Continental Ecclesiology*, (p. 481), that this “Western orientation,” as he somewhat quaintly terms it, applies to nearly all the basilican Churches still remaining at Rome; showing, of course, that, although the Altar was at the West end of the Church, the celebrant, as well as the Bishop and Clergy, would always look Eastward. So that there seems here to be a very significant coincidence between this change in the matter of orientation, and the change which I am assuming to have taken place, at the same time, in the position of the Altar, and of the celebrant in relation to it, and so, I think, a strong indirect confirmation of my view that this latter *was really a change* from the usage of the first three centuries.

¹ See *History of Ancient Christianity and Sacred Art in Italy*, (p. 51)—by Mr. C. I. Hemans.—I may mention here, that I am in-

This I believe to be the true explanation of those undoubted facts which have been sometimes appealed to, as affording a ground of objection to the Front position,—the objection that we are now considering. It has been said, indeed, that, in the primitive ages, the Celebrant was accustomed to stand at the back of the Holy Table, and with his face towards the people. Well, I admit that at a *comparatively* early period, i. e. in the fourth century, in consequence of very great changes in the external fortunes and history of the Church, the Celebrant was placed in a new position, which might seem, on a superficial view of the case, to be

debted to Mr. Hemans for my information about the two Chapels, just referred to, in the Catacombs of S. Calixtus and S. Agnes. He very kindly allowed me to cross-question him, as to any evidences that may be existing, or, at least, that are known to exist, of the basilican arrangement having been used at an early date, in the Catacombs. And he assured me that there were only the two instances here mentioned; one, being in the Catacombs of S. Agnes, and consisting merely of a dais (and nothing else), where probably an Altar once stood; and the other, in the Catacombs of S. Calixtus, consisting of a similar dais, with some fragments of small columns, resting upon it. Both of these examples, however, he thought (from surrounding circumstances), were of a date subsequent to the conversion of Constantine. He mentioned, in addition to these subterranean relics, a certain seat in the wall of a very small chamber, in one of the Catacombs, but (as he said) the chamber was too small to have ever admitted of a basilican Altar standing in the centre of it, and was most probably used for holding Councils and Synods, or for instructing Catechumens.—I ought, perhaps, to state that Mr. Hemans is one of the very best-informed men living, on these subjects, having spent more than a quarter of a century of his life in the reverent and conscientious study of Christian Antiquities at Rome and in other parts of Italy. And I may add that one result of those studies has been to make him relinquish the Roman Communion, which he joined in his early youth, and return to that of the Church of England.

what it is thus represented to be. But I contend that, on a closer examination, it will be seen that the new position was not, as it is supposed to be, at the back of the Holy Table, but at what was then believed to be the front; and that, although, in one sense, he faced the people from that position, yet, he was in truth practically ignoring them, as a part of the congregation, and that his position, at that side of the Holy Table, was adopted simply with a regard to the clergy, who were behind him, and not at all with any regard to the laity, who were before him. This, then, I believe to be the true explanation of the celebrant's ancient position, on the tribune-side of the Altar, and with his face towards the people. Such, at least, it seems to me, though I admit that it is based, to some extent, upon mere conjecture, and is therefore not to be pressed too confidently. Still, upon the whole, I venture to think it is the explanation which best harmonises with all the known facts of the case.

There is, however, one view of the matter,—that which, I suppose, must have prompted the appeal to this arrangement, as an argument against the front position in our own day,—and it is a view of which I think I may say, with the most absolute confidence, that it is certainly *not* the right explanation of that arrangement;—I mean, the view which regards the arrangement as implying a belief, on the part of the Church of that period,

that the celebrant, in the Holy Eucharist, was simply ministering *to* the people, and not, *in any sense*, offering a sacrifice, on their behalf, to Almighty GOD. For I think no one who has even the slightest knowledge of the Christian writers of that date can fail to be aware how clearly and emphatically they speak of sacrifice, in some sense or other, as belonging to the Eucharist; and not only so, but that, from this time, they begin to use even yet stronger language of the kind than before,—language, indeed, of a very highly rhetorical character, such as has, too often, and with too great a show of reason, been appealed to, in support of some of the worst forms of Roman error on this subject.¹

But, whatever opinion may be entertained as to the origin and significance of the basilican position, I do not think it can be regarded, from any point of view, with the smallest degree of complacency and approval. A method of celebration, indeed, which, on one hypothesis, makes the celebrant practically to ignore the people, while he is literally staring them in the face, and which, on another and the only alternative hypothesis, makes him pray *to* the people, and turn his back on the Bishop and Clergy, and so ignore them, must, in any case, be most anomalous and unsatisfactory.

¹ On this point, I do not think I can do better than refer to the learned testimony of your Lordship, in your admirable work on the xxxix Articles, pp. 739, &c.

And therefore it is no matter of surprise that experience of the arrangement very soon developed its objectionable character, and forced upon the Church the adoption of expedients, for the supposed alleviation of its very serious evils. One expedient was adopted—as I presume, with this object—at a very early period, by the Eastern Church, at least,—I mean, that of placing a veil or a curtain between the Altar and the people, during the time of Consecration. And this practice, which seems to have been in use so early as S. Chrysostom's day,¹ is, at this moment, the custom of all the Churches of the various Eastern Communions, throughout the world. In the Western Church, too, it would seem that, at a rather early period,—though not one that can easily be determined,—the custom arose, especially in the larger churches, of having supplementary Altars, placed against the wall; at which the celebrant officiated with his back to the people, i. e., *coram populo*. And these, if one may judge from modern continental usage, would be the Altars most largely frequented by the people. But, at a later period, the Basilican arrangement seems to have passed almost entirely out of use. For all new churches were built, pretty uniformly, on the same type as our own existing Churches and Cathedrals,—a type which, so far as it regards the disposal of the Bishop and Clergy and the position of

¹ S. CHRYSOST. *Hom. iii. in Ephes.*—See BINGHAM, book III., c. 6, § 8.

the celebrant, is almost an exact inversion of the Basilican arrangement. The altar, in fact, may be said to have been turned quite round, and, with it, the celebrant, and the Bishop and Clergy, behind him. So that, in future, the Bishop and the Clergy came to be placed between the Altar and the people; the celebrant stood at the altar, with his back turned towards all alike; and, in this way, he was able to celebrate, at once, *coram episcopo*, *coram clero*, and *coram populo*. And this order of things, so far as it regards the relative positions of the celebrant, the altar and the people, is now and has been for many centuries maintained, throughout all the Churches both of the Eastern¹ and Roman Communion,—except, indeed, in the *very* few Basilican Churches, at Rome and elsewhere, in which the old Basilican use still lingers on; as if to impress on after generations the feeling—which, if I may judge from what I have felt myself, whenever I have witnessed it, must be experienced by every one,—what a profound and intensely painful unreality it is.

I cannot take my leave of this subject without

¹ I believe that, at the present time, it is the universal custom, in the Churches of the East, for the Bishops and Clergy, if not taking an actual part in the celebration, to be placed on the Nave-side of the Sanctuary, during the Communion Service; and not only so, but for the celebrant and his immediate assistants alone to be admitted within the Sanctuary, during the Consecration, and while the Veil is drawn across it.—The celebrant consecrates, as I understand, with his back towards the people, though he is already concealed from their view, by the intervening curtain or veil.

remarking what a sad pity it is,—at least, in my view,—that the original adoption of this Basilican arrangement in the fourth century, should ever have taken place, and should so have left behind it, as it seems to me to have done, two such unfortunate results, as the custom of veiling the Sanctuary in the Eastern, and the multiplication of supplementary Altars, in the Western Church.

I have now considered all the objections against the Front position that I can call to mind, as requiring any serious notice. And I confess that, as it seems to me, the grounds on which they are based are so far from being solid and sufficient grounds of objection to that position, that they form only just so many valid arguments in its favour.

Regarding, then, as I do, the alternative position,—i.e. the North-end,—in the light of an essentially abnormal one, with literally nothing to offer in its justification, except its alleged necessity, as a means of escape from the front,—a necessity, which, of course, can only be proved, by establishing a clear and positive condemnation of the front position;—regarding, I say, the North-end in this light, and believing, as I do, that the front, so far from being open to condemnation, is really the only position that has a single reasonable word to say for itself, it will be readily understood that I

am unable to contemplate the prospect of having the North-end explicitly and definitively forced upon me, and upon those who think as I do, with any sort of feeling in the least degree resembling equanimity or resignation. I do not wish, indeed,—nay, I am as far as possible from wishing,—to see the front position enforced upon any of my brethren, against their inclination. But I am bound to confess that I cannot think of being myself compelled to use the other position, but with the most profound repugnance and aversion.

I know, indeed, that it is the fashion, in some quarters, to speak of this and such like questions in a supercilious and derisive spirit, as involving only matters of mere form, which (as we are told) no practical and sensible man can deem worthy of a moment's serious consideration. But, then, let me ask, what, after all, are words, but forms? And who does not know that sometimes the most tremendous issues are fought upon such narrow grounds as that of a mere word,—aye, and even of a single letter? That great controversy of the fourth century, which convulsed the whole of Christendom, as it has never been convulsed at any other period, was made to turn, at its most critical point, upon one single letter, and that the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. But, what was the real issue involved in that seemingly insignificant letter? It was absolutely nothing less than the question whether our Adorable

Redeemer were, in truth, GOD, or not GOD; and, if not GOD, then,—what one positively shudders even to think of, in conjunction with His claim to be GOD. Such, however, was really the issue involved in the apparently trifling question, whether or not this smallest letter of the Greek alphabet should be inserted in an epithet that was to be applied to Him, on Whom every loyal Christian feels that he can never lavish too freely and unreservedly all the love and worship of which his soul is capable.

I do not, of course, for one moment, contend that the issue involved in the present controversy, is of the same magnitude or solemnity as this: though I am fully convinced that it is one of a kindred nature, and one, too, that deeply stirs the religious sensibilities of many of the most earnest, thoughtful, devout and loyal members of the Church of England, among the laity, as well as among the clergy.

What that issue is, precisely, I will endeavour to explain presently,—at least, as I understand it. But, in the mean time, let me ask,—who is it that has raised this issue?—if, indeed, it be one of such insignificance. Or, at any rate, who is it that has sought and still seeks to press it to extremities? Not, as I contend, *we*, who, in perfect good faith,—at least, I speak for myself,—have used the front position, these many years, believing it to be lawful, as well as right. Is it not rather those

who, without having either law (as I can read it), or right, or reason, on their side, would endeavour to force an obnoxious practice upon us, in opposition to our profoundest religious sentiments and convictions?

I know, of course, that clergymen are often told that they have no right to any religious convictions of their own, that they are merely the servants of the public, and that they should be content to take their opinions and rules of conduct from their masters.

Well, I freely admit that we are the servants of that great community, founded by our Divine LORD, which we call His Church, and that we are bound to submit ourselves to those whom He has appointed to rule in it. I acknowledge, too, that, in any country where the Church has entered into union with the State, every member of the Church in such country, whether clergyman or layman, is bound loyally to abide by the duly-established and properly-defined terms of that union; or, if he finds himself unable conscientiously to do so, that he should then submissively and respectfully acquiesce in the penalties of non-compliance.

But there are certain views of the Church, and of the Ministerial Office in the Church, put forward rather prominently just now,—not, however, that they are by any means, new or original views,—which I am in nowise prepared to accept, as legitimate consequences of the admissions that I have just made.

One of these views is that the Church—at least, the Established Church in this country—is an institution which has nothing whatever to do with our Blessed LORD or His Apostles; that, although, in order to satisfy some of the popular prejudices of the time, Queen Elizabeth and her Parliament did their best to preserve the continuity in the succession of Bishops, yet, in truth, the Church was simply the creation of the Queen and Parliament of that day; and that, ever since, it has been nothing more than a mere department of the State; having, of course, its appropriate officers, like the Army or Navy, or any other department of the State, but doing all that it has had to do in the name of the Sovereign and Parliament of the Realm, or—carrying the view just one step farther, and regarding the Sovereign and Parliament themselves as mere exponents of the popular mind and will,—in the name of the people of England. So that, in fact, we, poor, benighted clergy, with the Bishops at our head, instead of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, as we had been vainly imagining all these many years, in the Name of the Ever-Blessed Trinity, have really been doing so in the name of the Sovereign, Lords and Commons—or, more correctly, perhaps, of the people—of England. If, therefore, we wish to know more fully and perfectly what that Gospel is that we are to preach, and what are the right forms for administering its

several ordinances, we are not to look back, as we had thought, to those ancient standards of faith and ritual, which have been handed down to us, as a sacred trust from the Apostles and their successors, but we should go to Parliament; i. e. practically, we are to have recourse to a plebiscite, for our information:—which, of course, means that the great Apostolic Commission, which we had hitherto deemed the charter and warrant for our ministry, has been all this while misread by us, and that the true reading of it is,—Go ye out into all the world, and have the gospel preached to you by every creature.

I do not certainly know whether the acceptance, or non-acceptance, of this reading of the Apostolic Commission is likely to be made one of the great issues of the present crisis. But if it is, I fear the crisis will be one of no mean import and consequence. I hardly think I can be wrong in saying that, at least, some considerable proportion of our Bishops, as well as clergy, will decline to prolong their existing relations to the State on the basis of such a doctrine as this. And I cannot help thinking, too, that, bravely as the doctrine has been lately championed by certain eminent persons, clergymen, as well as laymen, it is not likely to be ever seriously and deliberately adopted, as the permanent creed of this country.

But there is another, though a much more limited, application of this doctrine, sometimes

made to the relations between individual clergymen and their own particular flocks, especially with regard to such questions as the one now before us, of using the front position, in celebrating the Holy Communion. Clergymen are sometimes told that they have no right to do things of this kind, in opposition to the wishes of their congregation.

Well, I am quite willing to admit that there are certain limits to a clergyman's independence and freedom of action, in respect of the performance of Divine Service. He is, e. g., not to contravene the ritual law of the Church, which is obviously binding upon all—the clergy and the faithful laity—alike. There are, moreover, some points of ritual, not determined by law, but left to the discretion of the clergyman himself; with regard to which I think he is, nevertheless, bound, by the law of charity, as well as by the dictates of common sense, to consult the wishes and feelings of his congregation. And this is, no doubt, especially true, with regard to such points as involve the personal action and co-operation of the people themselves. But there are surely some points on which a clergyman may, and even must, be guided by his own conscientious convictions as to what is right and proper; particularly points where the *action* rests *entirely* with himself, and is not, in any sense, shared by the people, as, e. g., in the use of the front position. Is it to be said, indeed, with regard

to such matters, that the clergyman, whose office it is to teach religious duty to others, is to be the only person in the world who must have no sense of religious duty himself?

I know, however, that, in the attempts that are often made to define the proper limits of clerical independence and freedom, a distinction is sometimes set up between doctrine and ritual : as if an amount of latitude were permitted with regard to doctrine, which is not allowed with regard to ritual. And not only so ; but a practical reason is assigned for this supposed difference ; viz., that, while the members of a congregation are under no necessity to pay any attention to what their clergyman preaches, they cannot help taking part in the ritual that he uses. But, I venture to believe that there is a double fallacy here. For, in the first place, I cannot help thinking that, if we compare the language of the Title and Declaration placed before the xxxix Articles, with that of the Preface to the Prayer Book, we shall see that they imply, if anything, the exaction of a more stringent conformity, on the part of the clergy, with the Church's authorised standards of doctrine, than with her law of ritual. And then, in the second place, I am so far from being able to see that the laity need more protection from a clergyman's ritual, than from his doctrine, that it seems to me the truth lies just the other way,—so far, at least, as it applies to such points of ritual as the

use of the front position, in the Holy Communion. For, of course, the congregation are under no necessity whatever to alter their position, in consequence of any position that he may choose to take up. Nay, more; they have only to shut their eyes,—which most people do, at this time, and which any one can do, if he pleases, quite easily, and without being at all observed,—and they need hardly even know what the position of the Celebrant is; whereas, if a clergyman chooses to preach unsound doctrine, their only protection is to stop their ears, which is not so easy, and which, moreover, they cannot well do, without making themselves somewhat painfully conspicuous.

But I must hasten to a conclusion. There remains now but one point to be dealt with. It is, however, the very important one (already alluded to) as to the practical issue involved in this controversy. It is, in fact, the question, *why* so many of the clergy, and of the laity, as well, attach such vital importance to the use of the front position?

It might, then, be said, in answer to this question, that, if even there were no better reason for doing so, than simply because the front position is believed to be the most appropriate, expressive and reverent one, for celebrating the highest act of Christian worship, this consideration alone ought to be quite sufficient to give it a supreme

importance, in the estimation of every devout and loyal worshipper. But, then, it might, perhaps, be rejoined, that this is a consideration which belongs more especially to the domain of those whose duty it is to order the ceremonial of our public worship; but that it can hardly be said to be of a kind to justify any individual clergyman in making it a point of conscience to use the front position, irrespective of such ordering, or even, possibly, in apparent opposition to it.

There is, however, another and a far more precise and definite issue than this, involved in the question of the front position. And I do not know that I can better describe that issue, than in the words in which it was described, a few days ago, at a public meeting, by the accredited spokesman of that powerful and active organisation which calls itself the Church Association, and which has, in a very peculiar manner, made this question its own. The Rev. C. D. Marston, in a carefully-prepared paper, which he read at that meeting, on the 10th instant, and which is published in the *Hour* of the following day, apparently from the original MS., writes of the Front, or, as he terms it, "the Eastward Position," thus,—“Its essence lies in this, that the clergyman should so place himself, as to impress the congregation with the belief that he is *not* one ministering *to* them, *but* one ministering *for* them.” The Italics are not mine, but (I presume) Mr. Marston's.

These are the terms in which Mr. Marston defines the issue involved in the use of the Front position, and I do not know that it could possibly have been better expressed than it is here.

But there are one or two points, in this statement, that need to be very particularly observed, if we would understand and appreciate its full significance.

One of these points is, that what Mr. Marston here speaks of as "ministering," is, simply and exclusively, the saying of the prayers, and of such other portions of the service, as are supposed to be addressed to Almighty GOD. For it is only in saying these, that the celebrant would ever be found to stand in front of, and facing the Holy Table. When he is directly addressing the people, or administering to them the Consecrated Elements, he has always, of course, his face turned towards them. Consequently, Mr. Marston's words may be rendered thus: "The essence of the front position lies in this, that the clergyman should so place himself, as to impress the congregation with the belief that he is *not* one saying the prayers *to* them, *but* one saying the prayers *for* them;" i. e., of course, with them, in their name, and on their behalf, *to* Almighty GOD.

A second point to be observed, with regard to Mr. Marston's statement, is, that it is, of course, to be interpreted in harmony with the general tenor of his whole argument and conclusions, and is,

therefore, manifestly to be understood as implying that, while the Front position means *not* saying the prayers *to* the people, *but* saying them *for* the people, the North-end, on the contrary, means *not* saying the prayers *for* the people, *but* saying them *to* the people.

A further point to be observed is, that Mr. Marston speaks of the position of the celebrant as being a sort of *language*, which has a distinct and express meaning, and in which, therefore, of course, a man may either speak the truth, or tell a lie, just as plainly and emphatically, as in any other kind of language.

And now I think we may see pretty clearly what is the real issue of this controversy, as it is stated, or, at any rate, necessarily implied, in this published manifesto of our adversaries,—I grieve that I should have to apply such a term to any of my brethren in CHRIST and in the ministry,—and as I believe, too, I may fairly venture to adopt it, on behalf of my own side of the question. If, then, according to this mutually-accepted view of the language of ceremonial, we are to consider that standing at the North-end means saying the prayers *to* the people, while standing at the front means saying them *with and for* the people *to* Almighty GOD, it must clearly follow that when it is proposed that we shall be compelled to stand at the North-end, this means that we are to be forced to say something which we really believe

to be untrue. In other words, we are to be made to go into the special Presence of GOD, and, at one of the most solemn moments of our lives, and in the performance of one of the most sacred acts, if not actually the most sacred, in which any human being can be employed, we are to carry with us, into that Holy and Awful Presence, a distinct and categorical falsehood. Is not this, then, I ask, an issue of sufficient moment to make men feel extremely anxious and in earnest, as to whether or not they are to be driven to the North-end position, in celebrating the Holy Eucharist?

But, it may be said, in answer to all this, that we are surely under no necessity to accept the construction which our adversaries may choose to put upon those two positions. These things, we may be told, are (like words and phrases), purely conventional matters; and, therefore, we have, of course, as good a right to put our construction upon them, as other people have to put theirs. But, then, it so happens that our view of their meaning is the same as that of our adversaries. And, not only so; but, as regards the front position, at least, that view is the one which has the sanction and authority of (almost) universal opinion and usage. It should be remembered, that, not only in the entire Eastern and Roman Communion, but in all the Lutheran Churches of every country, and (as I am informed) in every

known religious body, throughout the world, by whom the elements are consecrated in the form of a prayer, and not in that of an address to the people,—except, alas! our own,—the Prayer of Consecration, and all the other prayers of the Communion Service, are, as a matter of course, said in front of the Holy Table.

But,—it might be asked,—even if we put this definite interpretation upon the front position, is there any reason why a similarly definite construction must, of necessity, be put upon the North - end? For, in point of fact,—it would probably be said,—this latter position has no real meaning whatever, of its own. And this is, no doubt, the very reason why it is used by so many people. They adopt it, indeed, for the simple purpose of avoiding the too great definiteness of meaning attached to the front position.

I do not think, however, that this purely negative character can be justly claimed for the North-end position. It is not, in fact, one of those matters, in which we may *either* simply do a thing, *or* simply *not* do it. If we take the North-end position, we do not simply *not* take the front, but we take another and a different position. And we cannot, of course, help doing so, unless we can annihilate ourselves, for the time. But, the position that we take, whatever it is, means something. And to take up our position at the North-end, if it means nothing else, means at any rate this,—

that we deliberately go *out of our way*¹ to avoid the front, and to avoid what the front signifies. If, then, the front means that the prayers are said, *not to* the people, *but for* the people, to Almighty GOD, it must follow that, in taking the North-end, though we may not express positively our belief that the prayers are said *to* the people, yet we do positively express a *non*-belief that they are said *for* the people, *to* Almighty GOD. And, consequently, if it be our real belief that they are said *for* the people, *to* Almighty GOD, our use of the North-end position, with its expression of *non*-belief in this view, is as real, though not, perhaps, as flagrant, a falsehood, as if the use of the North-end meant really all that Mr. Marston says it

¹ There are some persons who deduce an argument, in support of the North-end position, from the position of the officiating clergyman, in most well-appointed churches, in saying Morning and Evening Prayer. It is said that he usually occupies a place on the North or South side of the Chancel, with his side-face to the congregation. But it should be remembered that there are two considerations which make a great difference between these two cases. First, the officiant in the Chancel, at Morning or Evening Prayer, says the service at his own proper desk or stall, and does not *go out of his way*—as he would, in using the North-end—to *avoid* an Eastward position. The occupants of a Chancel or Choir are placed on opposite sides, for the sake of the antiphonal performance of the service; but they are supposed to be placed *around* the Holy Table, the occupants of the *return* stalls, if there be such, actually facing it. So that, if one of those stalls happened to be in use by the officiating clergyman, he would actually face it, of course. Still I think it would be a decided gain to have the authorised Litany-Desk always used for the Litany, and for any other long series of prayers or collects. But, there is a second point of difference between this case, and that of using the North-end position in the Holy Communion; and that is, in respect of the higher dignity of the Communion Service, which, of course, makes any departure from right use, in that service, all the more objectionable.

means, viz., that the prayers are said *to* the people. And, after all, I fear, the use of the North-end position does practically convey this impression, and no other, to the minds of the vast majority of those who witness it. So that it becomes, practically, to all such, a falsehood, in that worse and more flagrant form of falsehood, of which I have before spoken.

And I must own that I do not think the aspect of the case is at all improved by looking into the subject-matter of the falsehood in question. For, let us see what we are to understand by saying prayers *to* the people.

It might, perhaps, seem, at first sight, that there is really no possible sense in which anyone can say *to* the *people*, prayers which, in their form and phraseology, are manifestly addressed to Almighty GOD. Still I suppose there are certain possible senses in which this expression may be understood. And let us see how they bear upon our present question.

And, first, one might certainly speak of saying prayers to the people, in some such sense as that in which a parent or teacher says prayers to a child or other uninstructed person, i. e., in the sense of dictation; as being the only means of enabling such person to offer to GOD any kind of articulate or intelligent prayers at all. But this, I presume, is not Mr. Marston's sense of the expression. For, he would hardly consider the celebrant to be

merely performing, in the Communion Service, this kind of office for the congregation; not to mention that such a view seems quite to exclude the celebrant himself from all personal participation in the worship of the service.

But, secondly, you may, no doubt, use the expression in a Pantheistic sense. For, indeed, the only sense in which a Pantheist could possibly be spoken of as saying any sort of public prayers, would be that of saying them *to* the people. I need hardly say, of course, that, in the true and proper Christian sense, prayers are, essentially, direct personal addresses, from one created personal intelligence, or more, to the One, Supreme, Uncreated, Personal Intelligence. But to the Pantheist, who believes only in an impersonal deity, and with whom the sole idea of godhead is that of a universal system, of which he is himself an essential and integral part, there can be no possible conception of prayer or praise, beyond that of a sort of complacent recognition of himself *as a part* of this universal system. Such a person might, therefore, evidently apostrophise the system, under the name of deity, whether in the way of private meditation, or of a public harangue, just as he might apostrophise life, or the moon, or the ocean, or anything else, but without the slightest possible thought of being listened to, or heard, by the object of his apostrophe. It is evident, therefore, that the whole essence and purport of such effusions, whether

public or private, must be simply subjective and reflective. They must begin and end, alike, in the feelings and thoughts of the speaker and his fellow-worshippers, so-called. But this, again, as I suppose, is not what Mr. Marston would contemplate, in his view of ministering *to* the people.

There is, however, one other way more, in which prayers may be considered as said *to* the people. And, although, as I thankfully admit, this is not by any means so far removed from the true ideal of worship, as that just spoken of, it is still, I fear, more nearly akin to the Pantheistic view, than many of those who favour it would like to believe. It is what I may, perhaps, term, by way of distinction, the Puritanical notion of worship,—referred to, by the by, in page 36 of this letter. This view does not, of course, proceed, like the other, on an explicit denial of the Personality of GOD. On the contrary, indeed, it is held, though somewhat incongruously, by many who show, in their lives and general spirit, a profound recognition of that great and fundamental principle of all religious belief. In their views of prayer, however, and especially of public or common prayer, this truth seems to be almost practically ignored by them. They appear, indeed, to regard public prayer, rather as if it were a mere instrument for religiously affecting the minds of the worshippers (so-called), than as the vehicle—the simple vehicle—for carrying their cries and

petitions to the Merciful Ear of Him, who (as we know) is ever listening to, and waiting for, the prayers of His people. Hence, such persons are apt to be very impatient, as a general rule, of all stated forms of prayer,—even of our LORD'S Own Prayer itself,—as being dull and unimpressive; and to delight only in impassioned and exciting harangues, addressed ostensibly to the Ear of Almighty GOD, but really meant by the speaker (though without, perhaps, his knowing it) to stir the hearts of his earthly audience. Such effusions as these are often called “powerful prayers,” and those who are skilled in the production of them are said to have “a great gift in prayer.” But we cannot help feeling, very often, that the “power” of such prayers lies rather in the rhetorical fire which melts and moves the souls of men, than in that far higher power—that “power with GOD”—of an intent mind and a simple and tranquil faith; and that the “gift,” too, which is employed in this way, would be far better employed in direct personal addresses to the people; i. e., in honest and avowed preaching, of which this (so-called) praying is but a comparatively ineffective and, I fear, I must add, sacrilegious counterfeit.

In what I have just said, I have, of course, been speaking of extempore prayers, and those who delight *only* in them, and of such alone. And I have but to say, further, that, when such people happen to be compelled or condemned to the use

of a stated and regular form of prayer, it is, of course, only natural that they should desire to give to that form as much as possible of the character of their extempore utterances; which they will do by infusing into the delivery of it as much pathos and variety of intonation as they can. And, then, to give it full effect, it should, obviously, if possible, be read from an elevated and commanding position, and with the speaker's face (or, at the very least, one side of his face) turned towards the audience.

Now I do not know whether this exactly fulfils Mr. Marston's ideal of public worship. I hope not. But it is, undoubtedly, a view of saying prayers, or "ministering, *to* the people," which does prevail, to a great extent, among certain classes of the religious community. And I can well understand that all such persons must have a very profound dislike of the front position for the celebrant, as expressing an idea which is utterly repugnant to their whole religious tone and habit of mind.

But, on the other hand, let me say that, to those who use, and advocate the use of, the front position, this ideal of worship (so to call it) is, generally speaking, not less hateful and repugnant. And it is, as symbolising this ideal (though, I admit, but imperfectly), that we are so decidedly adverse to the North-end position. We are far, however, from having the slightest disposition to undervalue preaching,—real, honest, avowed

preaching; and, moreover, we should desire it to be made as good and efficient as it can be, of its kind. It is, without doubt, a divinely-appointed instrument for the salvation of souls, in bringing them to the true service and worship of GOD; and we think that every available gift of mind and heart, together with the highest possible cultivation, should be consecrated to the purposes of such a work. And I need scarcely appeal, for proof that this is really the general sentiment of those who use the front position, to the fact, that, among their ranks, are to be found some of the most zealous, laborious, learned, and powerful preachers that have been known in the Church of England for many generations. But, while we do undoubtedly desire preaching—ostensible preaching—to be of the best possible character and quality, yet we do not desire to see worship turned into preaching, i.e., an end made subordinate and subservient to a means; and, most of all, do we shrink from being compelled, ourselves, to become parties to what we believe to be nothing less than a prostitution of the highest Act of Christian Worship, and the degradation of it, from its rightful position, to that of being a mere instrument, and, in the sense contemplated here, but a very indifferent and ineffective instrument, of human edification.

Before I conclude, I should like to disclaim all intention of reflecting upon individuals, in any

remarks that I may have made in these pages. My observations have been intended to refer solely to facts and opinions, and not to persons. And I hope I have expressed my views with the most perfect appreciation of the entire sincerity and honesty, as well as learning and intelligence, of those who hold opinions different from my own.

I have only to say, in conclusion, that, while I have very thankfully availed myself of your kind permission to express to you thus freely my own views on this question, I must beg all who read them to understand that you are not, in the least degree, committed to any sort of agreement with them.

I remain, my dear Lord Bishop,

Yours very gratefully and sincerely,

MORTON SHAW.

ROUGHAM RECTORY,

Nov. 28, 1874.

[*For Postscripts, see pp. 148, 151.*]

APPENDIX (A).

(See Page 31.)

THE SPECIAL PRESENCE OF GOD.

I CANNOT help thinking that it would be of great advantage, practically as well as theologically, to many of us in the present day, if we gave a franker and fuller recognition to this undoubtedly Scriptural Doctrine of a *more and less* Special Presence of GOD, in respect of particular times and places. I do not, of course, deny that the doctrine is full of metaphysical difficulties. But, then, so is everything else connected with the Nature and Being of GOD. Indeed, one is hardly able to think—much less to speak—of such things, without becoming very soon involved in all sorts of apparent contradictions.¹ The truth is, that we must look for our knowledge on these subjects to the Word of GOD, and look there, too, in simple faith.

¹ As an illustration of this, I may refer to a point which bears very directly upon our immediate subject. The Omnipresence of GOD is very often urged, and even seems to be alleged, in certain places of Holy Scripture (e.g., Acts vii. 48-50, &c.), as a conclusive argument against any possible doctrine of a Special Presence. But, then, if we resolve the idea of Omnipresence into its constituent elements, viz., Presence and Universality, and examine them, we shall see that the idea of Presence, like that of Personality, appears so necessarily to contain within it the idea of concentration, as to make it quite incompatible with all notion of Universality, and so to make the idea of Omnipresence itself a contradiction, and the word a solecism.

For it is obvious that He alone can teach us; since He and He alone can know perfectly and truly the Modes and Mysteries of His Own Being. But we may easily learn, there, all that we have any real need to know. And I have not the slightest doubt that we are taught there, very plainly, this Doctrine of which I am now speaking. I am sure, indeed, that no one can read the Bible, with candour and intelligence, and fail to see how deeply and thoroughly this doctrine underlies and penetrates the whole teaching and history of the Old and New Testaments alike. Nay, would it be too much to say, that the very Incarnation itself—that stupendous Verity which forms the one central and pervading idea of the whole Inspired Volume—is, at the same time, the highest and most perfect expression of this doctrine of a Special Presence of GOD, in respect of time and place?

But the point on which I am particularly desirous of insisting here, is, that this Special Presence of GOD is *more and less* special, according to the different forms and conditions of its manifestation. I do not, of course, mean to say that these various degrees of speciality are anywhere explicitly stated or defined, in Holy Scripture. But they are, as I conceive, necessarily involved, and therefore certainly implied, in those diversities of form and condition under which it is represented, on different occasions.

And, first, let us look at the Old Testament. And here it should be remembered that, when the Presence of God is spoken of, we are to understand His Spiritual Presence, as GOD, in contradistinction from the Incarnate Presence of the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity. And we undoubtedly find this Spiritual Presence of GOD spoken of, in the Old Testament, with the most clearly implied gradations of speciality. E. g., sometimes He is spoken of as Present with His Ancient People, as a whole nation,—when we must obviously contemplate His Presence under one form and gradation of speciality. Then, at other times, He is represented as being more and less Present, i. e., as bestowing His Presence, with greater and less degrees of speciality, on certain (more or less) highly favoured individuals among them. Then, again, He is described, at one time, as being specially Present in some place or building dedicated to His exclusive Worship and Service; and, at another time, as being even yet more intimately Present in a particular portion of the place or building, devoted to some higher and more solemn part of such Worship and Service.

But, to come now to the New Testament, we not only find the Special Presence of GOD spoken of, here, as in the Old Testament, in the sense of a Spiritual Presence; but we have placed before us, besides, that very peculiarly Special Presence of GOD,—the Incarnate Presence of the Eternal

SON; and placed before us, too, as the one engrossing theme of its whole narrative and teaching. We have that Blessed Presence exhibited to our adoring contemplation, first, in His Life of Self-chosen Humiliation upon earth, and, then, afterwards, in His Risen and Glorified Life in Heaven,—whatever that place is; for we should probably never have had any distinct conception of it at all, as a place, if He had not localised it, so to speak, by His Presence there.

But, further, we must remember that, although our Blessed LORD is undoubtedly now in Heaven, and must continue to be there, till the end of the world, and this, too, in such a sense, that, in the same sense, He can be nowhere else, He is, nevertheless, in other senses,—and these most true and real ones—Present now upon earth, and will be so, as long as the earth shall last. We are assured of such Presence, indeed, by His Own Word and Promises. He is Present, e. g. “in” His Mystical Body, the Church, as well as “in” each individual living member of that Mystical Body. He is also Present “with” His Apostles and their coadjutors and successors, even unto the end of the world, in the fulfilment of their Apostolic Ministry. And, lastly, He has promised to be “in the midst¹ of”

¹ We are not, of course, to understand by this phrase, “in the midst,” any mere geometrical centre of the gatherings referred to; but rather some sort of nucleus, in a moral and spiritual sense; i. e., some point of conjunction, if I may so express it, where the hearts and minds of the worshippers may seem to meet, in their united approach to the Divine

any two or three (or, of course, more), who shall be “gathered together in His Name;” i. e., gathered by those who shall have authority to gather His people together, as well as to act in other respects, in His Name; and this, too, whether they shall be gathered together out of doors, or in a private house, or within the walls of a sacred building, or (still more) around His Holy Table; and, more especially, of course, in the celebration of that Blessed Sacrament, of which He says expressly Himself,—“*This is My Body,*” —“*This is My Blood.*”

Now I do not think anyone can fail to see that, in these several forms and aspects, under which the Presence of Our Blessed LORD is placed before us, in the New Testament, we must necessarily recognise greater and less degrees of speciality, in respect of that Presence. And there can, of course, be no question that the highest degree of speciality belongs to the Presence of our LORD in Heaven. For it is manifestly impossible for Him to be Pre-

Mercy-Seat. And surely there is nothing—nothing, at least, in any Christian Church—which appears so aptly to fulfil this idea as its Altar or Holy Table; the more so, indeed, when we remember that, in the authoritative setting apart of any Church for Public Worship, by one of our Chief Pastors, it is the dedication of the Holy Table which is supposed to constitute (in a spiritual sense, at least) the most important element, if not the very essence, of that solemn function. So that, in fact, when a Christian Church is consecrated, and when people are thus, in the Name of CHRIST, authoritatively gathered together (as they may be said to be) into it, they are, in a very special sense, gathered around the Holy Table, as at once the spiritual centre of their assembly, and the pledge and token of His promised Presence among them.

sent anywhere else, in the same sense and with the same speciality, as He is there. For, indeed, He is there, in that sense in which He *went away from* this world, at His Ascension. And, in that same sense, He there “sitteth,” or abideth, or *remaineth*, and will remain, *until* He shall *return from thence*, at the last day, to judge the quick and the dead. To suppose, therefore, that He can be anywhere else, in the same sense, would manifestly be to suppose Him to be *removed* from where He is; and to believe in such removal, even as a mere possibility, before the Day of Judgment, would be simply and categorically to deny one, if not more than one, of the Articles of the Christian Faith.

Although, however, our Blessed LORD cannot certainly be said to be Present upon earth, in the same sense and with the same degree of speciality, as He is in Heaven, yet we cannot surely dare to doubt that His Presence here—in all those various modes and degrees of speciality in which it has been so clearly and positively assured to us—is an intensely true and real Presence.

There are, however, I know, some who find an insurmountable difficulty in reconciling the doctrine of our LORD'S true Presence in Heaven, with any possible view of a real Presence upon earth. And, accordingly, such persons, in their laudable fear of compromising the reality of His Presence in Heaven, practically explain away all reality from His Presence here. They say, in-

deed, that, except in Heaven, He cannot be said truly to be in any *place* whatever; but only in persons; and that He is Present in them, only as regards their minds and hearts; i.e., in their thoughts and feelings; and, further, that it is simply their thinking and believing Him to be thus Present in them, and nothing else, which constitutes His Presence there.

Now, I confess it appears to me that all such explanations as these are utterly inadequate to the language used in the New Testament, on this subject. I admit, of course, that a very great deal is said there about the Presence of CHRIST within the soul, as well as about the great importance of Faith, as a means or condition of securing that inward Presence to the soul. But, while I frankly admit all this;—while I allow, indeed, that the Presence of CHRIST must be within our souls, if it is to be of any saving or vitalising efficacy to us; and while I allow, too, that, without faith, we cannot have His saving Presence within us, and that, in fact, unbelief has the awful power of excluding and repelling that Blessed Presence from within us; still, on the other hand, it seems to me that, looking honestly at all the language used on this subject in the New Testament, it is impossible not to see that that language reveals to us most clearly a Presence of CHRIST outside of us, as well as within us; and that even that

Presence which is within us is something more than a mere creation of our faith. It is, in fact, a simple inversion of the true order of things to say that His Presence is, only because we believe it. On the contrary, we are to believe it, just because it is. In a word, we are to bring our faith to it, instead of hoping to bring it into existence by our faith. And, then, using, *in faith*, all the divinely-appointed instrumentalities and agencies which are meant to bring it home to us, we are to join ourselves to it and make it our own, not in the sense of a mere emotion or belief, but as a Living, Indwelling, and Abiding Reality within our souls.

But, while we thus regard the Presence of our Blessed Lord upon earth,—whether it be within us, or outside of us,—as a Real or (as it is sometimes termed) Objective Presence, we should be especially careful to resist even the slightest tendency towards regarding it as independent of His Presence in Heaven. It is, indeed, really, His Presence in Heaven, which is made Present to us on earth; not, of course, in the way of translation, but of expansion. It is true that He is Present in Heaven, through the removal of His Presence from earth to Heaven; but He is Present now upon earth, through the extension of that Presence from Heaven, by the wonderful operation of the HOLY GHOST, to us upon earth. And we should never lose sight of the complete subordination of the Presence on earth to

the Presence in Heaven. In all our devout recognition of the various modes of His Presence upon earth, as well as in our grateful use of the different instrumentalities by which His Presence is brought near to us and within us, we should still see, in all and beyond all, the Supreme Presence above, and should never, on any occasion, let our minds rest in any Presence short of that. It is true that, wherever our Blessed LORD is believed to be Present, in any sense, there will a truly devout soul bow down itself before Him; and, moreover, in the higher and more special modes of His Presence, such a soul will naturally do so with a profounder and intenser, as well as perhaps more conscious, devotion. But our worship should never, under any circumstances, *rest in any intermediate* Presence, however exalted, but pass on, through it, to the Ultimate and Supreme Presence in Heaven. Any worship, indeed, which stops short, *even in idea*, of the Heavenly Presence, must, I conceive, so far as it does so, have just so much in it of the nature and essence of idolatry.

I will conclude my observations on this subject with an illustration, which may serve, at any rate, to clear away some of its difficulties. It is from an analogy in the world of nature. And though, of course, I do not put it forward as an absolutely perfect analogy, or as affording a complete solution of all the difficulties of the subject; yet, as it is founded on one of the scriptural types of our Blessed

LORD, and this perhaps the highest of them, I trust it will not appear an unsuitable or unworthy illustration.

The Sun, which has its own proper place in the heavens, where it may be said to be present in such a sense, that it cannot be said to be present anywhere else, in the same sense, is yet present, in another and this a true and real sense, in its rays, wherever those rays may penetrate. But those rays come sometimes into contact with bodies which are able to receive and transmit their light; and at other times, and perhaps, more often, they come across opaque bodies, which are unable to do so. Again, they sometimes come into contact with bodies that are capable of absorbing and appropriating their heat; and sometimes also they meet with bodies that do so very imperfectly, if at all. But the rays are there, just the same, with all their natural light and heat, no matter what sort of objects they may come in contact with. It is not, in fact, in the power of these objects either to make or unmake the sun's rays, though their own relations to those rays are, of course, affected by the physical properties and conditions of their own being. Here, then, we have an illustration of the objective character of our LORD'S Presence, not only in Heaven, but also upon earth; and, in this latter sense, also, within us and outside of us, alike.

But, again, the sun may be said to be *more and less* specially present in its rays, when those

rays are made to pass through convex lenses, of various degrees of size and convexity. Here, then, we have an illustration, in some sort, of those various degrees of speciality under which, in different ways, our LORD is pleased to vouchsafe His Presence to us upon earth.

And, lastly, there is one other point, in which the analogy serves our purpose. No one, of course, regarding the rays of the Sun, in any of their influences and operations, would ever be likely to forget that they were the rays of the sun,—that same sun which has its special abode in the heavens. And no intelligent thinker, in contemplating these different modes of the sun's presence, in its rays, could ever fail to pass, in thought, through these secondary and inferior modes of its presence, to the supreme centre of that presence in the heavens. The application of this, I conceive, is too obvious to need more explicit mention.

I feel that some apology is needed for the extreme length and prolixity of this note; but I hope I may plead the importance of the subject, as well as its important (though perhaps indirect) bearing upon my general question, as some sort of excuse for it.

APPENDIX (B).

(See Page 47.)

THE NONJURORS.

THERE can be little doubt that the Nonjurors, as a body, were High Churchmen, and that they represented, pre-eminently, that section of the Revisers of 1662, who did their best, at that time, to give a higher tone to the worship and ritual of the English Church. But there was, unquestionably, a marked diversity of opinion and practice among them, throughout the whole period of their separation from the Church, not only as to the use of the front position, but also with regard to other questions, of a more or less kindred nature.

This diversity showed itself, from the beginning, even while they continued to use the authorised Prayer-Book of 1662, in the various interpretations which they put upon certain of its rubrics. But it manifested itself, ere long, in a more conspicuous way. For a very influential section of them, after a while, gave up the use of the Prayer Book of 1662 altogether, and went straight back to the first Prayer Book of Edward the Sixth; which, in 1717, they had reprinted, with some slight alterations, expressly for their use in public worship. In that

Prayer Book, as it is scarcely necessary to repeat, the front position is ordered throughout all the prayers of the Communion Service, and this feature of it is retained in the reprinted volume.

But, in the following year (1718) the Nonjurors adopted a "New Communion Office" of their own, in which there are some remarkable points, strongly indicative of the divided state of opinion among them, both as regards the front position, and some other questions.

I will now proceed to give an illustration, *à propos* of our present subject. At the beginning of the "New Communion Office" there is the following preliminary rubric,—“The Altar at the Communion time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand at the East End¹ of the Church or Chapel. And the Priest and the People, standing with their faces towards the Altar, shall say or sing (in the same manner as the Psalms for the day are said or sung) for the Introit, the Psalm appointed for that day, according to that translation which is in the Book of Common Prayer.” Then, in the course of the Service, the following rubric occurs several times,—the last time being just after the Offertory, and there being no subsequent direction whatever, as to the posture or position of the celebrant:—“Then the Priest shall turn to the

¹ The Dean of Bristol, in his recent letter to Canon Mather, seems to have overlooked this direction, as to the position of the Altar, and to have assumed that it agreed with our own rubric on the same point; and so (as it seems to me) has been led to draw an erroneous inference from it.

Altar, and standing humbly before it, he shall say, &c.” Now, looking at these two rubrics alone, I think we should be apt to say that it was simply impossible for their framers to have ever contemplated any other position for the celebrant, than the front of the Holy Table. But I suppose this position was distasteful to *some* of the Nonjurors of the period; and, accordingly, in order to meet their scruples, the following non-natural interpretation was put upon these rubrics, in the form of a supplementary rubric placed after the first of them, and introduced just as though it had been an after-thought:—“Note, that whenever in this Office the Priest is directed to turn to the Altar, or to stand or kneel before it, or with his face towards it, it is always meant that he should stand or kneel at the North-side thereof.”

This non-natural construction, however, does not seem to have carried much weight with it, in the estimation of the Nonjurors, as a body,—possibly, from their not knowing where to look for a North-side, when the Altar was placed against the East-wall. At all events, we find that, in a volume,¹ published by Dr. Brett, two years later (1720), and professing to contain a reprint of the “New Communion Office,”—with the compilation of which he had probably as much to do as any one,—this

¹ *A Collection of the Principal Liturgies, Used by the Christian Church in the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist: With a Dissertation upon them, &c.* By Thomas Brett, LL.D. 8vo. 1720.

rubric makes no appearance; while, also, in Dr. Deacon's Prayer Book,¹ published in 1734, we find the clearest directions about the Altar being placed "at the East-end of the Church or Chapel," and plenty of orders to the celebrant to "turn him to the Altar," but certainly not one single syllable about the North-side, not to speak at all of the North-end, of the Holy Table. There was also the following rubric, among a number of others, at the beginning of the Communion Office, which certainly does not seem to admit of any interpretation, favourable to the North-end, except it be a very non-natural one:—"6. The People during the time of Divine Service are always to have their faces turned towards the Altar; the same is supposed of the Priest and Deacon whenever they kneel, and likewise when they stand, except where it is otherwise ordered."

¹ *A compleat Collection of Devotions, both public and private; taken from the Apostolical Constitutions, the Ancient Liturgies, and the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England, &c.* London, 1734. —The Communion Office and the other portions of this book that were adapted for the purpose, were actually used by many of the Non-jurors of this period, in their public worship.

POSTSCRIPT.

I HAVE to thank you very much for so kindly sending me the Dean of Bristol's pamphlet, which I had not seen before.

The Dean's argument, as distinguished from his conclusion, I accept most gratefully, as affording very substantial support to my own contention, in pp. 58-68 of this letter. His conclusion, however, I do not accept, and I doubt, moreover, whether he will ever find any sound and clear-sighted ecclesiastical lawyer to adopt it.

The Dean, admitting that there is no *North-side* to the Holy Table, so long as it is placed against the East wall, and that, therefore, the celebrant cannot, under such circumstances, be required to stand at the North-side, very generously and benevolently proposes that the Holy Table shall be removed from the East wall, and be placed "table-wise" in the body of the Church or Chancel, so as to *make* a North-side, and thus to enable those who very particularly dislike that position, to be forced to make use of it. And this, too, by-the-by, he proposes, under (apparently) the full consciousness that such a removal of the Holy Table would be not only against universal custom, but also utterly repugnant to the (almost) universal religious instincts and sentiments of English Churchmen.

Before, however, the Dean of Bristol's kind and liberal suggestion can be carried out, it must be ruled by the Courts that the actual state of the law makes this removal of the Holy Table not only allowable, but compulsory. And, if it be compulsory, then it must be enforced and acted upon universally, and not merely in those particular cases where it is capable of being made simply an instrument of torture and oppression.

But I doubt whether any candid lawyer will ever be found to say that it is obligatory. It does not seem to have been so understood even before the last Revision (1662), and I cannot think that the Revisers of that day understood it so. We know that they wished to introduce a new rubric making the "*Altar-wise*" position of the Holy Table obligatory; and I cannot believe that, in withdrawing that rubric, they thought they were leaving the other position compulsory; or yet that this was the view of Convocation and Parliament, however anxious both might have been to leave the question an open one.

I observe, the Dean says that the words "before the Table," in the Consecration rubric, contemplate the same position as the words "at the North-side," in the fourth rubric at the beginning of the Communion Service. But, he seems to forget that, when the Consecration rubric was first framed, it was associated with another new rubric,—that just referred to, as to the "*Altar-wise*" position of the

Table,—and must therefore be interpreted in the light of that rubric, even though that was afterwards given up. I admit, however, that the words “before the Table” will *bear* the Dean’s construction, though it is not the original or natural sense of them.

There can be no doubt that there is a real confusion in these rubrics; but it is mainly due to the action of the Puritanical party. If, at the Revision, they had allowed that position of the Altar which is now universally in use, to be made obligatory by means of the new rubric then proposed, and if, moreover, they had allowed the North-end position to be ordered, at the same time, as was also proposed, they would thus have secured for their successors in the present day just precisely what they want. But they prevented the High Church party of that period from doing these things, and now I think (with Mr. Walton) that the existing High Church party have great reason to be thankful to them,—and not only that party, but (in the interest of legitimate freedom and common sense) all reasonable and liberal-minded Churchmen also,—for having (though unintentionally) caused the law on this point to be left in its present condition,—a condition, in which, as I venture (in the same interest) to hope that it will always be allowed to remain.

POSTSCRIPT II.

(Second Edition.)

I FIND that my reference (p. 8) to Mr. Simeon, as having used the front position in consecrating, has attracted a good deal of attention ; and it may, perhaps, be interesting to some of the readers of this letter to know the circumstances under which this fact came to my knowledge.

I was about to be licensed by Bishop Blomfield, with the consent of Mr. Fuller, as Incumbent, to a cure in the parochial district of S. Peter's, Eaton Square ; and a preliminary question arose, as to whether they would be justified in sanctioning my use of the front position, in my new charge. I am bound to say that both the Bishop and Mr. Fuller approached the question in the most generous and liberal, as well as conscientious, spirit ; and I shall never cease to feel grateful to both of them for their kindness and consideration towards me, on that occasion. I have reason to believe that the Bishop took counsel—as, indeed, it was his habit to do, on such occasions—with his learned Chancellor, Dr. Lushington ; and I know, too, that he had the further counsel of an eminent Judge and of a

very brilliant and distinguished Bishop. These all agreed in the opinion that he might safely and properly concede the point. But, what ultimately determined his decision in my favour was the information, given by Mr. Fuller, that it had been Mr. Simeon's practice, during his life, and was still the practice of an eminent clergyman of the same school, to use the front position in saying the Consecration Prayer. The information, as regards Mr. Simeon, was given by Mr. Fuller, on the strength of his own personal recollections. And, in order to place the other point beyond dispute, it was arranged that Mr. Fuller should write to the surviving clergyman (who happened to be a friend of his), and inquire whether his practice was as alleged. This was done; and, the answer being in the affirmative, the Bishop at once gave up the point, remarking to me, at the time, in his usual frank and genial way,—“Well, no one can say, at any rate, that there is Popery in the practice, when Mr. Simeon and Mr. ——— have been accustomed to use it.”

It is due to the latter gentleman to state that, in a letter which I received from him a few months ago, he told me he had discontinued the practice ever since Mr. Fuller wrote to him (in 1852), and also that he was sure he could answer for Mr. Simeon, as well as for himself, that neither of them had ever intended any “doctrine” by their use of it. This I cordially believe. And, understanding,

by that expression, *Roman doctrine*, I can join with him, myself, most heartily, in repudiating any such meaning for the front position, so far as it has ever been my own practice to use it.

Since the first publication of this letter, I have received a communication from an old friend—the Rev. W. Burkitt, Vicar of Leeds, in Kent—in which he mentions several well-known Bishops and clergymen, whom he has himself *seen* to use the front position in consecrating; including Bishop Law (of Chester) in 1814; Bishop Legge (of Oxford) in 1818–22; Bishop Maltby, both while he was Bishop of Chichester, and afterwards (1841) while at Durham; and the Rev. J. G. Foyster, Rector of All Saints, Hastings, in 1841–43. He also mentions a number of very interesting facts, bearing in the same direction, which I hope he will soon bring before the attention of the public in some available form. He states, on what he believes to be reliable authority, that it was the practice of Romaine, among other eminent Evangelical clergymen of a remoter date, to use the front position in consecrating.

I ought not, perhaps, to omit mentioning the very remarkable circumstances under which Mr. Burkitt's attention was first directed to this subject.

He was present, on Easter-day, 1814, at an Ordination, in S. James's, Piccadilly, at a very early hour, by Dr. Law, Bishop of Chester. And there

was with him (in the gallery) a friend who had been educated as a Presbyterian, at Aberdeen, but had lived much on the Continent, in the company of Lutherans and pious Jansenists. This friend was very much struck by observing that, in saying the Consecration Prayer, in the Communion Service, the Bishop took up his position in front of the Holy Table, and he asked Mr. Burkitt if this were the usual practice in the Church of England. Mr. Burkitt, who was then only sixteen years of age, answered that he had never been present before at the Communion Service, and did not know. From that time, however, he began to make very careful observations on the point. And so, too, did his friend, who became thenceforward a regular Communicant in the Church of England. Mr. Burkitt states that their joint inquiries and observations, from 1814 to 1820, led them to believe that the front position was decidedly the prevailing use, and that by many it was maintained with great strictness and jealousy.

I am sure that Mr. Burkitt will gladly afford any information in his power to anyone who will write to him on the subject.

December 28, 1874.

Since the above was written, I have received a few lines from my friend, the Bishop of Brechin, reminding me of the kneeling-stool in front of the Holy Table, in Brasenose College Chapel, and also

mentioning that Dr. Hodson, Principal of the College (1809) and Regius Professor of Divinity (1820), always celebrated in front.

Since the foregoing was in type, I have received a most courteous letter from the Rev. Canon Carus, containing the following passage:—"I attended Mr. Simeon's Church from 1823 till his death in 1836, and never saw him consecrate in front of the Holy Table; and I have made inquiry of the Rev. F. Hose, Rector of Dunstable, who was Mr. Simeon's Curate from 1829 till 1836, as to his recollections, and he writes to me—"I have not a moment's hesitation in saying, that the position taken by our dear friend, in consecrating the bread and wine, was invariably and undeviatingly on the North side of the Table.'" I cannot, of course, for an instant, hesitate to accept these clear and definite statements as affording quite sufficient proof that, during the period referred to (1823-36) it was *not* Mr. Simeon's habit to use the front position in consecrating. And, in the absence of other information, they might certainly be taken as presumptive evidence that he did not use that position at any other period of his life. But then, on the other hand, I have the authority of Mr. Fuller—whose high character, as well as keen intelligence, make it very difficult indeed to disbelieve him—for thinking that Mr. Simeon *did* use the front position at some period of his life. And,

putting the several statements together, it would seem to my own mind most probable, that he may—like the other clergyman, whose practice Mr. Fuller mentioned to me, at the same time—have adopted the front position in his earlier years, and laid it aside, for some reason or other, afterwards. Mr. Fuller's Cambridge experiences began in 1808, when he first went into residence, and therefore it is very likely that his statement was based upon observations of an earlier date than those of Canon Carus and Mr. Hose. I think it right, however, to say that I am not, in the slightest degree, concerned to have any opinion of my own, on the question, either one way or the other. For, entertaining, as I do, the most profound respect for the memory of Mr. Simeon, I feel still that his practice on this particular point cannot be deemed, in itself, very important; while, as regards my own general argument, it is even of less moment. Still, I appealed to it, indeed, simply as the unconscious testimony of a good man—not at all likely to be biassed in that direction—in support of what seems to me to be the natural and obvious interpretation of the Consecration Rubric. And, if even I were to set aside his testimony, as uncertain and therefore unavailable, I should still consider its loss to be far more than compensated by that of the persons referred to in the letters of Mr. Burkitt and the Bishop of Brechin.

December 30, 1874.

